An Inversion of Power: An Analysis of the British Riots of 2011
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The fires of a burning England were not out before its most prestigious and prominent voices began delivering their verdict on what had caused them. These voices, expressing the views of what we will call the cultural elite, were nearly unanimous. The rioters were poor and the government had cut their support, taking away all that they had. It had raised them to believe they needed to have certain consumer objects, but then it had not given them the means to obtain these things, so they had no means of getting them except through theft. The police were racist and treated people disrespectfully, intolerably so. Prominent figures in the government and the economy were corrupt; the rioters were no worse, and perhaps were even taking their cue from them. And so on.

But there was one thing about these judgments that all had in common, which was that it was the society, specifically its central, defining institutions that was at fault. The rioters, who were the powerless, were just doing what anyone would do in the circumstances they were in. It was the society that created those circumstances and, therefore, it was society that was to blame for its own destruction.

In our view there is a problem that arises from seeing things in this way. If the society, through its cultural elite, accepts that it was responsible for the riots, then it effectively justifies them; it shifts the guilt from the rioters to the society itself. The forces of innocence were attacking the forces of corruption and injustice. What side should a good person be on, anyway? But if society is so unjust that rioting is people's only recourse, how can it see itself as worth maintaining? The result may be that society does not feel morally entitled to rise in its own defense.

In that case, the balance of power within the society would be altered. We would have an inversion of power. Weakening society's capacity to defend itself would cause the forces seeking to destroy it to become relatively stronger, even to the extent of putting the society into jeopardy. Yet the people who were rioting were poor and disorganized; characteristics that we usually associate with powerlessness. How did this inversion of power come about?

In this chapter we will attempt to answer this question by putting forward a number of interlinked hypotheses, built around an analysis of the role played by Political Correctness in preparing the grounds for the unfolding scenario.

**Political Correctness**
The condemnation of society that leads to holding it responsible for the riots, hence to the inversion of power, is, itself, a product of society. It did not develop after the riots, but is a cultural configuration that has been in operation for a long time. The riots, in a sense, simply provided it with a new occasion for its expression. We call this cultural configuration political correctness.

We suggest that the connection between the riots and political correctness is quite close. In this view they are kindred; two phenomena with different appearances, but the same meaning, which they are playing out in different registers. They can reinforce each other, lending strength to one another and even making the other possible.

We will use an analysis of the dynamics of political correctness to offer a perspective on the riots. The theoretical framework of this analysis, which has been developed extensively elsewhere (Schwartz, 2003, 2010), is psychoanalytic.

The credibility of psychoanalytic theory is, of course, not universally granted. It has, however, a suitability to the study of political correctness that it may be thought to lack elsewhere. There is clearly an element in political correctness. It is a form of censorship without a censor; we impose it on ourselves. Yet, it keeps us away from the reasoned discussion of social issues that everybody can see are important, consequential, and desperately in need of wide-ranging analysis. It does so through an emotional power that is rarely gainsayed and which anyone can see is ultimately against everyone's interest; yet it prevails nonetheless. If that is not irrationality playing itself out in the social domain, what is?

Yet where does it get that power? This is a question that is rarely posed -- it is, after all, politically incorrect to do so -- but it is no less important than the totality of the issues that political correctness has obscured. And if we do not approach this question through psychoanalytic theory, exactly what shall we approach it through? The rational understanding of irrationality is what psychoanalysis was developed to do. In fact, more than any specific theory, that is what psychoanalysis is. It is in that spirit that we will undertake this inquiry.

We will inquire both in a general way and with specific regard to an important element of the riots: namely, police hesitation to impose order. This had terrible consequences, in that the rioters saw that they could get away with doing whatever they wanted, and led others to join the riots in a massive way.

All are agreed that this resulted in a powerful acceleration of the riots.

As it was put by an interviewee for the Interim Report:

Most people got caught up watching the riots. They saw the police doing nothing and just thought they could get away with it too.' (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2011: p.68)
It also made ordinary citizens fear for their own safety, property, and rights thus increasing a sense of overwhelming insecurity at all levels of society. Our claim is that it was, in some significant measure, a product of political correctness.

Further on, we will look at the underlying dynamics of political correctness, but first we need to get some sense of the nature of riots.

**Psychodynamics of riots**

The key to the psychoanalytic understanding of riots is that, at the most basic level, there is not very much that needs to be explained. At the roots, the psychodynamics of a riot are quite straightforward. What calls for understanding is the fact that people are not rioting all the time.

This was the essence of Freud's classic essay Civilization and its Discontents. What he presents is the view that there is a “death instinct,” an innate aggressiveness that drives toward destruction in human beings, indeed in all living things.

But the necessities of civilization require that we renounce this instinct in its pure form. Freud was famously ambivalent about this renunciation and mindful of the fragility of the institutions that it creates.

> [I]t is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up on a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This ‘cultural frustration’ dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings. As we already know, it is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle. (Freud, 1962: p.44)

So civilization is based on the renunciation of instincts, but it wears this "cultural frustration" uneasily. Aggressiveness is a permanent force that is always just underneath the surface and capable of breaking out at any time the renunciation lapses.

Now, this renunciation of instincts, Freud says, takes two forms: suppression and repression, depending on whether the cause is external or internal. In the case of suppression, we renounce our instinctual aggression under the threat of physical punishment at the hands of authority. In the case of repression, we internalize authority, originally the parents and specifically the father, to form the superego, which gives our aggression back to us in the form of guilt.

Political correctness is an attack upon the father (Schwartz, 2003, 2010), who represents authority. As such, it undermines both of the ways in which instinctual renunciation takes place. This leaves the aggressive instinct, always just underneath the surface, to express itself without constraint. That is what we saw in the riots.
**Oedipal and anti-Oedipal psychology**

The key to understanding political correctness is what has been called anti-Oedipal psychology, and the best way to understand anti-Oedipal psychology is to understand the Oedipal psychology that it is defined against (Schwartz, 2003, 2010). Oedipal psychology, based on Freud's adaptation of the myth of Oedipus, is, of course, familiar to us all. For our purposes, however, it will be useful to bring out some of its implications to the fore.

In doing so, we should stipulate that we are referring to Oedipal and anti-Oedipal psychologies as they operate at the collective level, as cultural phenomena, establishing cultural configurations, and not primarily on the level of specific individual psychologies. It is as patterns of meaning that they concern us.

At any rate, as we know, Freud tells us that in the beginning of psychological life we do not experience ourselves as separate from mother, but as fused with her. In this state, life is perfect. Mother is the world to us and loves us entirely. Because of this fusion, mother's love for us is the way we experience ourselves, which is as the centre of a loving world. Freud refers to this as primary narcissism, and its appeal is obvious. The advent of any degree of separation has the result that we desire to return to it. Mother, then, is the unique object of our desire. We want to marry her, as Oedipus did.

The problem is that father stands in the way. He has a bond with mother that does not revolve around us; in fact it excludes us. We must get him out of our way, kill him, so we can marry and fuse with mother again. But there is a problem: father is big and we are small. It is not we who will kill him, but he who will kill us. In fact, he does not even have to kill us. He can cut off our penis, such as it is, and end the rivalry that way. The result is pure terror on our part, with the fear of castration being ever present.

What shall we do? Well, it is not inevitable that we do anything. Some people spend their lives in a condition of castration anxiety, afraid that if they follow their desires, they will be mutilated by authority. But luckily, for most of us, there is another way. We can become like father, and then we will be able to have, not mother exactly, but someone like mother. More precisely, we will be able to have a bond with mother, as father has, and which we understand in the only way we can, as the kind of close loving embrace that we remember from our own early experience.

This programme of becoming like father proceeds first through identification with and idealization of the father, and then through the internalization of father's way of engaging the world to form the superego. In this way we learn to navigate and thrive in the world that the fathers have made, gaining love as father has gained love, through the accomplishments that she values and that have led her to welcome him into her embrace. In this fantasy, we will have returned to fusion with mother and be again the centre of a loving world. This is the fantasy that Freud called the ego ideal.

It is this pursuit of the ego ideal, of mother's love in this idealized form, unconscious though it may be, that provides us with the desire to do what we must do in the world, to fulfill the
obligations that come to us as adults, and which are present to us in the superego, such as the necessity to make a living through work. All of these involve taking control of ourselves, which we do through our stock of aggression. That, taken all together, is what is called Oedipal psychology.

But notice here that all this is based on the idea that mother and father are bonded in a way that we would like to experience. Mother, that is to say, loves father. But what if she does not love father? Then the whole enterprise would fall apart, since idealizing and internalizing father were based on the premise that he has a place with mother that we would like to have.

Yet why should she love father?

As we saw before, the child's love for mother is absolute, and is based on her love for the child. For the child, that love, by itself, is enough to make life perfect. This must impart to the child's image of mother, which we may call the maternal imago, a degree of goodness and omnipotence that nothing in real life can ever match, nor to which anything can even come close. Moreover, mother's love for us, because of the early fusion, is the root of our sense of being lovable, and therefore the key to how we feel about ourselves.

The result is that the infantile image of mother, which remains with us in the unconscious, is the most powerful image in the psyche.

As the infant sees her, she would be the fount of all goodness in the world. She would be omnipotent. Her love would make anyone feel perfectly loved and would be all anyone would ever need. Her very presence would make life perfect.

Set against the prodigies she could perform, what would there be about a man's accomplishments that could possibly register as being sufficient to gaining standing with her? Even the best would be compromised, partial, and imperfect. Indeed, by acting in the world, creating a world as warped as he is, he has taken away the possibility of her creating a far better world just by being herself.

In these circumstances, her attitude toward father would not be one of love, but of hostility and resentment. The result would be that instead of wanting to become like the father, the child would see that the route to mother's heart would be to join the mother in hating the father. This is the core of anti-Oedipal psychology. Our point is that, driven by the power of the maternal imago, it has come to structure the approach toward the world of the British cultural elite.

Anti-Oedipal psychology is Oedipal psychology turned upside down. The child's view of father is the opposite of what it is in Oedipal psychology. Father has not gained mother's love by his accomplishments; they cannot be worth anything. He must have gained his presence with her through the commission of fraud and violence. His accomplishments, such as they were, were part of a subterfuge.

The implication is that the separation that he caused between infant and mother was not due to a legitimate process that the child would have to adopt, it was illegitimate; it was an act of theft.
Now, the child is not just seeing his own case here; in effect, this is the lens through which he sees the world. The father's theft of love from the child would be seen especially to apply to those groups, such as various minorities, that have not had love in the past. Mother's love has been stolen from them in a systematic way. That systematic theft is what the father does, and indeed what the father is. The society that he has created and runs is rotten and corrupt at its core. It is a structure of oppression and nothing but oppression. It deserves to be destroyed. Destroying it would bring about the return to mother's love. That would be a good and righteous act.

In the interim, the consequences of his acts should be registered. The father should be hated, and those who have been unloved in the past, the groups from whom he has stolen love, should be loved in compensation; indeed, they should be idealized. Their claims against the father and the society that represents his theft should be supported.

This gives us the basic dynamic of political correctness. It can easily be seen how it underlies some of the dynamics of the British riots. Not all of them by any means. We have already pointed to the instinct of destructiveness which surely was on display. But if one may speak of a meaning of the riots, and this would certainly include those attempts to justify them that we saw coming from the cultural elite, anti-Oedipal psychology offers what we believe is a useful perspective. Whatever else the riots were, they were certainly an attack upon the father and his works.

Before looking further into this, there are a few points that it would be useful to make, largely concerning the nature of the father's works.

Among the most important works of the father has been to create and maintain social order. Social order has been negotiated among the fathers over the millennia. Each of them was trying to attain his own vision of the ego ideal. But a common framework of objective self-understanding, in which people have been able to understand each other as objects, and therefore in the same way, made it possible to predict each others' behaviour and made reliable cooperation possible. Following Lacan, we call the establishment of this common framework the paternal function. It enhanced the individual pursuits important to each individual. Social order, based on the paternal function, was the accomplishment that made the other accomplishments possible.

The most critical and basic element of social order is the law, which applies to everyone. But under political correctness, the law is an instrument of oppression and is to be disdained, while social order is to be destroyed.

Also important is that the father is in the boundary business. It was not the father that caused the separation of infant and child, but reality itself. The father is the personification of reality as it is first experienced. But he can choose to actively engage what he previously suffered passively. This defines his role, which is to build on this connection. Dealing with reality, and creating a boundary between harsh external reality and the family, where mother's love can then flow freely and safely, becomes his special function (Schwartz, 2003).

To deny the value of the father's works means denying the need for a boundary. Mother's love should become the organizing principle of the world. With it, we should be able to operate
safely without boundaries, limits or constraint. There could be no such things as real enemies, only other children who have not been sufficiently loved. We would all be able to do what we want, to act on our impulses with impunity and in perfect safety.

This would have the effect of redefining the concept of the self. In Oedipal psychology, the self is imagined to be separate from the world, which is for the most part indifferent to it. In anti-Oedipal psychology, separation is no longer considered normal; the very idea of indifference disappears and the self is imagined to live in a world that revolves around it with love: an image that may be called "the pristine self."

Anything other than love would be experienced as a violation of the self. Most importantly for our purposes, that would apply to indifference, which would be redefined as hate.

This would be particularly so for those defined as oppressed, which is to say those who have been deprived in the past. They could do what they want with a sense of enhanced entitlement, seeing it, indeed, as the manifestation of justice and morality. The rioters could see themselves in this way and the politically correct, whose idea it was in the first place, would agree.

In the next section, we will show how a number of these concepts played out in the riots, largely using material from interviews with the rioters, which can be helpful in conveying their states of mind.

**Anti-Oedipal Psychology and the Riots**

As we have said, the purpose of the father's work was to bring himself closer to the ego ideal; at the social level, that means gaining the society's love in the form of social standing. In our society, undoubtedly, the primary symbol of the ego ideal is wealth. Wealth, then, is the symbol of attainment of the ego ideal. If the value of the father's works is denied, there is no way of justifying why some should have the symbols of the ego ideal, of social standing, while others do not. Rather, within the concept of the pristine self, one is entitled to the ego ideal just because one is who one is. In the words of one, which caught the attention of many, "We're worth it."

This idea of the riots as resulting from rage arising from a violated sense of entitlement is common in the conceptions of the rioters, and helps them explain themselves to themselves in ways that others just don't get.

Andrew, a 16 year old student, says

> Police don't think we're rioting for a reason. They believe we're rioting because Mark Duggan died and we have no other reason. Like, we're rioting cos they're not giving us nothing to do, they're taking away EMA [educational maintenance allowance], taking away free travel, taking away certain allowances that teenagers have and they're not replacing it with anything good. (Lews, 2011)
Similarly, if others have it, while you do not, they must have stolen it from you. Property, in the anarchist Proudhon's terms, comes to be seen as theft. The wealth of others, that is to say, is a symbol of injustice and a suitable target of righteous destruction.

Charley, another student, was caught up in running battles with the police. He said: "There must have been at least 200 people...It was just a horde, like a mosh pit.... Cars got destroyed. Boss cars. Like Beemer, Mercedes. I'm sitting there watching kids just rain stones on them." (ibid.)

And taking the symbols of wealth and social standing for yourself simply returns things to their proper order.

Omar, a poor 16 year old from the suburbs, had taken the train into the Birmingham city centre. New clothes were a special treat for him, but not just for the sake of the clothes themselves. In the torn and dirty clothing he usually wore, he felt that "people with money, good families", looked down on him:

I hate feeling like people are judging me. They don't know about me and then they just look at you and I hate it, I absolutely hate it.

But, regarding his new looted track suit

[W]hen I get new clothes I feel better... They will have to look down at someone else." (ibid.)

So one can easily understand that the riots, which unleashed vast amounts of destructive energy against the very structure of society, could have appeared to the rioters, not only as legitimate, but as righteous. This typically took the form of a celebration of attacks upon the law and the police, who were widely seen as illegitimate: "The police are the biggest gang out there."

Some interviews make clear the connection between the police role and suppression of the instincts, and the ease with which aggression is unleashed when that suppression stops:

This is from James, a 19 year old student who originally joined the riots to fight the police, with no intention to steal anything, but stayed to take what he could:

Someone came up with the idea: if we spread this, could the police like control it?... I think the looting came about because it was linked to police,... We're showing them that, yeah, we're bigger than the police, we are actually bigger than the police. Fair enough, we are breaking the law and everything, but there's more of us than there are of you. So if we want to do this, we can do this. And you won't do anything to stop us. (ibid.)

Antagonism toward the police can be seen in almost all of the interviews with the rioters. For example, Alex, a 32 year old white rioter from South London, recounts how he stepped out of pub in Tottenham to find the early stages of the riot. An abandoned police car had been set on fire, and young people were throwing bottles at the police. He watched as they pushed
another police car into a wall, where it rolled back into the street. He saw them smash the windows and place a black garbage bag on the seat. Then he joined the action

It was the police car – I know what they stand for... For the record: yeah, I do hate the fucking police ... I was caught up in the situation. And it was like: let's cause fucking chaos – let's cause a riot.... I went up, put my head in there – the front-seat window – set light to the black bag and walked away from there and just slowly watched it, and everybody was cheering.(ibid.)

Then he watched as the gas tank blew up. The images of the two burning police cars flashed through thousands of mobile phones, enticing a myriad of others to join the melee.

And, from another rioter:

I thought, wow, like, there's actually a force against the government, and I thought of it as like a battle, like a war, that was starting like, to put it into perspective. To put the riots into perspective, I thought of it as a war between the youth and the government, police.

"I think the youth and people in general and the government is opposing ... so that's why I think of it as a war. The world right now is unjust. Society, how I feel, it's unjust.

"When I went outside for the first time, I could feel like, that the air was, it wasn't how it normally was, it was like an unspoken kind of feeling just floating around. It actually made me feel really strong. It made me feel really powerful. (Carter, 2011)

An important aspect of this was the rioters' justification of their behaviour by reference to the supposedly abusive behaviour of the police. This particular justification was wholeheartedly embraced by the cultural elite. The report Reading the Riots, a joint project of the Guardian newspaper and the London School of Economics (Rusbridger and Rees, 2011), took it entirely at face value and placed this claim at the very centre of their analysis. They said that 85% of the rioters they interviewed said that policing was an "important" or "very important" factor in the riots. (p.20)

The focal point for this tension with the police was a tactic called "Stop and Search," where police search persons that they pick up on the streets whom they have reason to believe have committed a crime. Most of the rioters had been subjected to this tactic, which had been disproportionately applied to black people, and blamed the riots on the aggressive and discourteous manner with which it was employed.

Of course, it is possible that the British police, marinated in racism, had been so abusive in their treatment of black people, that a revolt, in the form of the riots, was understandable. But our analysis, as it points to the inherent antagonism in anti-Oedipal psychology, between the pristine self and objective social order, suggests another possibility.

According to the official Interim Report (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2011) those arrested for rioting had committed, on average, eleven previous offenses and of those who had
committed prior offenses, the average number was fourteen. Eighty-eight percent of those arrested had been previously "known to the police" as a result of having been previously arrested, convicted or cautioned. (p.29)

As senior officials were reported in the Final Report (Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012) to have said: "[A]s 9 out of 10 arrested rioters were known to the police, it is not surprising that they cited poor relationships as a motivational factor." (p.24)

With specific regard to the tactic of Stop and Search, pulling someone off the street and searching them is by nature aggressive and discourteous. Being treated on the premise that one may be a criminal is a violation of one's dignity and is going to be felt that way by anyone who does not credit the reasonableness of the police action. But the capacity for seeing the reasonableness of police action arises from seeing one's behaviour from the standpoint of the society's common framework of objective self-understanding. Yet that comes from the internalization of the father, which is, according to the present theory, exactly what was being rejected here.

Rather, the evident feeling of grievance suggests a level of entitlement characteristic of the pristine self. Such a person would see police as being abusive even when they were doing their job in an entirely proper fashion.

The chapter up until now offers an explanation for the outset of the riots. The continuation of the riots needs further explanation, since the agencies of social control could have contained this aggression directed against society by doing their traditional work of countering that aggression by harsh punishment. Yet this did not happen. We need to ask why not.

**What Happened to the Forces of Social Order?**

There is agreement amongst observers and the public that the police hesitated to impose order and that this hesitation was widely noted and served as an accelerant to the riots, transforming them from local occurrences to a large scale frenzy.

To understand this hesitation, we need to see what impact anti-Oedipal psychology and political correctness had upon the police, who were, after all, the agents of the now rejected superego.

In effect this absence of police had a profound impact, not only on the course of the riots as such but also on a sense of public disbelief and growing social anxiety that law and order were not being maintained as expected.

The point to be made here is that the police were required, even within the context of their normal functioning, to turn their aggression against themselves and see themselves as an oppressive force. The rioters, in other words, were justified in directing their aggression outward. The police were required to turn their aggression inward; they were the ones who were supposed to feel guilty.

We can think of the result as the castration of the British police.
In order to understand how this came about, we need to engage with the issue of race, and with the history of the police's relationship to that issue.

**The castration of the British police through political correctness**

At the outset, the rioters were overwhelmingly black. Later on, they became quite multiethnic, but if one is looking to understand the initial hesitancy, the orientation of the police toward the black community suggests itself as a good place to start our analysis.

Within the framework of political correctness, black people have been designated as the paradigmatic oppressed group, from whom love has been stolen by the father. Now, within the logic of political correctness, objective social structures are not recognized as objective, but are seen as agencies of oppression. Our point is that, for many black people, objective social structures have come to be seen as agencies for the specific oppression of black people, which is to say racist.

The dictates of political correctness require that, in pursuance of the demand for love of the oppressed, this interpretation is to be validated. The effect has been to categorize police practice as racist, even if the police are doing exactly what they are supposed to do in order to maintain law and order.

To show how this developed in Britain, a look at history is necessary. Specifically, one must consider the aftermath of the murder on the night of April 22, 1993 of a young black man named Stephen Lawrence. Lawrence, a person whose blamelessness in this incident has never been seriously questioned was, along with a friend, waiting for a bus in a predominately white area of South London. He was set upon by a group of five or six young white thugs. One of the thugs shouted "What, what! Nigger!" and stabbed Lawrence who died of his wounds.

The police investigation of the murder, which involved up to 25 police officers, was soon focused, based on information from people in the neighborhood, on a group known as the Acourt gang. We now know, on the basis of DNA analysis, that these were, indeed, the attackers. However, at that time, although several members of the gang were arrested, the evidence was ruled by the Crown Prosecution Service to be inadequate to sustain a conviction, and they had to be released.

But by this time the incident had become an international cause célèbre, and this dénouement was unacceptable. So the investigation continued and was reinvigorated. It was lavishly resourced, and included the placement of videotape equipment in the apartment of one of the members of the gang, where they frequently gathered. Still, the authorities did not acquire information which they believed would be sufficient evidence for a conviction.

The Lawrence family, however, could not accept this judgment and began a private prosecution of some of some of the gang members, which commenced on April 17, 1996. In that trial, which received full police cooperation, the gang members were acquitted, due to the unreliability of the evidence.
From a legal standpoint, that would have been the end of the matter. England had an established principle of "double jeopardy," which prevented suspects from being tried again, once acquitted, even in a private prosecution.

For our understanding of the effects of this incident on the psychodynamics of the police, however, things have not yet begun. That beginning arrived when the Lawrence family claimed that the reason the gang were not convicted was that the police, and the society as a whole, were racist.

The final culmination of this was the trial itself which, according to Mrs. Lawrence, had been a sham:

In my opinion, what happened in the Crown Court last year was staged. It was decided long before we entered the Courtroom what would happen — that the judge would not allow the evidence to be presented to the jury.

In my opinion what happened was the way of the judicial system making a clear statement, saying to the black community that their lives are worth nothing and that the justice system will support anyone, any white person who wishes to commit a crime or even murder, against a black person. (Macpherson, 42.13)

The family brought the matter to the Police Complaints Commission, which authorized an investigation by the Kent Constabulary that produced a 400 page report which found that, whilst there were areas of the investigations that were of varying quality, there was not "any evidence to support allegations of racist conduct by police officers."

But things were not to remain at that stage. Rather, with the advent of the Labour government, a new inquiry was inaugurated under a panel headed by a retired High Court judge named Sir William Macpherson, which was intended to make recommendations concerning how the police should handle racially motivated crimes.

In the end, Macpherson produced a report running 335 pages of text which, like the Kent Constabulary, found no evidence of overt racism or discriminatory behaviour, either at the organizational level, regarding official policies, rules or permitted practices that encouraged or condoned racism, or at the level of the conduct of individual police officers. Macpherson said, "we have not heard evidence of overt racism or discrimination, unless it can be said that the use of inappropriate expressions such as 'coloured' or 'negro' fall into this category".

But they found the Police Service guilty of racism nonetheless. They did this by claiming that the Police Service was afflicted with "institutional racism," a term they derived from the American black power activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton (1967). Moreover, through a breathtaking feat of generalization, they found it applied to the rest of British society as well.

We offer the view that it was this conclusion, which was widely cheered throughout the country, that was responsible for the subsequent trajectory of the British police. In analyzing
the thought of the Macpherson group, we have been guided by a superb book by Norman Dennis, George Erdos, and Ahmed Al-Shahi (2000) that rigorously and comprehensively dissects the Macpherson inquiry, with regard to its process and product.

This is Macpherson's definition of "institutional racism":

> The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 6.34)

The key term in the definition is "because of." Notice that there is nothing in the making of this attribution that needs to be based on evidence, or be directly identifiable by observation. To find racism they are going to have to read the organization's unconscious mind, as it were. But how can such a reading be done in a way that would establish their claim as firmly grounded?

Remarkably, in an issue of such importance, they did not try to ground it. They based the claim on "inference," which, in effect, meant they thought it was true (6.40). In effect, they made the claim as dictum and defended it by casting aspersions on anyone who disagreed with it as being themselves racist (e.g. 6.47).

The critical element here was their definition of racism, which was entirely subjective and without concrete reference. They employed various formulations, one being a definition by the Association of Chief Police Officers: "any incident which included an allegation of racial motivation made by any person." Another, equivalently, was "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person".

Thus, under this definition, something is racist if someone says it is racist, and especially if it is perceived to be so by the victim, who may, of course, only be defined as a victim by this imputation of racism itself. In this way, it becomes a tautology, a statement that is true by virtue of its terms alone. In Kant's terms, its truth is a priori.

But this definition deprives the designation of racism of any objective content. Anyone can accuse anyone else of racism and that accusation itself would be all the proof necessary. The problem is that nothing of any significance will have been proved.

That, of course, does not mean that Mrs Lawrence's claim is false. It simply means that the Commission's acceptance of the claim is of no significance. And it means that if the claim were to be validated, it would have to be independently validated on the basis of evidence. But we have seen that no such evidence had been adduced, even within the testimony of the Lawrences. Add in the possibility that what was behind the charge was projection, and we see that there is, in the Lawrence accusation, nothing of substance.
And yet, there can be no doubt that Mrs Lawrence thought she was saying something of significance, and that the panel agreed with her. What can be the basis of their belief on this point?

The answer is political correctness. This is the point at which the dynamics of anti-Oedipal psychology, and here we should recall that we are concerned about the operation of this psychology at the cultural level, as establishing a pattern of meaning, come fully into play.

As we have seen, for anti-Oedipal psychology, the objective world has been defined away. The idea of it was a subterfuge promoted by the father. Within the domain of the mother, the world would revolve around us with love. Fusion with her would mean the attainment of the ego ideal. We would be idealized, which is to say we would be the centre of a loving world. The normal self would be the pristine self.

Any response other than love and idealization would be experienced as a violation of the self, an assault upon the self. This would take specific form for those defined as oppressed, for instance those defined as having been oppressed because of their colour. They would experience lack of idealization as structured assault against the self on account of race; in other words as racism.

Notice the implication here. This makes the accusation of racism, as it was used in this case, dependent on the proposition that, in the absence of racism, the world would revolve around one with love.

But that is just not true. The world would no more revolve with love around the accuser than it revolves in that way around anyone else. The indifference of the world is just a fact. The world is not the accuser's mother any more than it is the mother of anyone else. And this is so entirely independent of race.

Now, let us be clear what we are talking about. We are not denying that racism exists; we are simply denying the validity of the charge of racism in cases like this: where the charge is treated as a tautology, true by virtue of having been made, and where there is no objective evidence upon which it could be empirically based. How often the charge of racism issues within such a constellation, and how much it is a valid response to a real situation, is not for us to say. But it does not matter in the present analysis, because the specific case that concerns us is significant in its own right.

However small the category to which it belongs, it was the instance that led to the designation of the British police as institutionally racist, and to the consequences that followed from that. We are suggesting that these included the castration of the British police, and the consequences of that, including their fatal hesitancy in defending England against the riots of the Summer of 2011.

The corollary of all this is that the charge of racism in this instance, which appears to refer to something in the other, a pattern of behaviour, perhaps, or a state of mind, is something quite different. On the argument we have put forward, it is not about something in the other, but
about something that is not in the other. It represents an invocation of the basis of one's claim to having one's feelings of being abused by the indifference of the other validated.

The other half of the equation is that the authorities, in this case Sir William Macpherson, 27th hereditary chief of the Clan Macpherson, commanding officer of the 21st Special Air Squadron Regiment of the Territorial Army, honorary fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and latter day acolyte of Stokely Carmichael, operating in the maternal role within the dynamic of political correctness, provides exactly that validation.

**The Macpherson use of the term “racism”**

The Macpherson group's report mentions five areas of evidence for the demonstration of racism: (a) the treatment of Mr and Mrs Lawrence at the hospital on the night of the murder; (b) the initial reaction to the victim and witness Duwayne Brooks; (c) the family liaison; (d) the failure of many officers to recognize Stephen’s murder as a racially motivated crime; and (e) the lack of urgency and motivation in some areas of the investigation.

In evaluating these, it is important to recall again that none of the exhaustive investigations of the police found any concrete evidence of racism at all. The charges of racism, then, came down to nothing but feelings, and perhaps projections. Whatever they were, in the instances that are central to this case, they were made by the Lawrence family and DuWayne Brooks, and then ratified by Macpherson's group.

But the testimony of Mr. Brooks was inconsistent, unreliable, and unusable (Upton, 1999); the trial judge said that Brooks did not know "whether he is on his head or his heels." And the stated view of Mrs. Lawrence was clearly over the top. It does not deny the sincerity of her emotions at the time to say that the proposition that British society would support the killing of any black person by any white person was contradicted by the zeal with which that very society had turned itself upside down in trying to bring the killers to justice, and indeed which elevated her statement to its importance. Whatever the motivations behind the extravagance of her assertion, whether they were political, psychological, or simply a penchant for hyperbole, they were certainly outside the limits of the sort of accuracy that dispositive evidence requires.

The question becomes, in the absence of supportive evidence, what was the basis upon which Macpherson found racism? That question turns on what "racism" meant to his group. The crucial point about this is that, in agreement with our theory, in every case where racism was supposedly seen, as opposed to point (d), in which the evidence of racism was that it was not seen, racism referred to nothing other than treating the Lawrences and Brooks with indifference. This point is conclusively demonstrated by Dennis, Erdman, and Al-Shahi. Considerations of space preclude the enumeration of all these instances; one must serve as a good enough illustration.

In this example, a police officer named Little was reported to have said to Mr. Lawrence at the hospital to which Stephen had been brought: "we've got a young lad in there, he is dead, we
don't know who he is, but we would like to clarify that point. If it is not your son then all well and good, but we do need to know. I am sure you would like to know as well." (Macpherson, 12.44)

The Macpherson group observed to begin with, that Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence required careful and sympathetic handling, and that Mr. Little's approach was insensitive and unsympathetic, which is true, but then they said this:

Although he had worked in multi-cultural societies and areas throughout his service and believed that he treated everybody in the same way his lack of sensitivity and his inaction, particularly at the hospital, betrayed conduct which demonstrates inability to deal properly with bereaved people, and particularly those bereaved as a result of a terrible racist attack. He failed to deal with the family appropriately and professionally. *This was unwitting racism at work.* (emphasis added) Macpherson, 12.62)

The point is that there could have been any number of reasons for Officer Little’s insensitivity. Maybe he was just an insensitive guy who would have treated anybody that way. Yet that possibility was not considered. Evidently, it was not thought to matter. The question is why such an obviously relevant issue was not taken into consideration. The reason, we suggest is that it was actually not relevant to the way they were using the term "racism".

Our view is that, within anti-Oedipal psychology, race established a claim to maternal embrace, to being treated as the pristine self. Anything short of that would be experienced as a violation of the self on account of race, and hence as racism. Macpherson provided no substance to this vacuity, but simply carried it forward and gave it official blessing.

**Institutional Racism**

From this point of view, we can see that the charge of institutional racism made a certain kind of perverse sense. Doing what the police had traditionally done would, within this framework, be seen as racist.

**What did the police traditionally do?**

Since the 19th Century, the British policing tradition, which has been the basis of professional policing throughout the West, has been defined by nine rules (see, for example, Civitas, no specific date). These rules, which give strong emphasis to the necessity of maintaining "public favour," are of particular interest to us here because they specify the paternal way public support is to be sought. Rule Five is particularly relevant

5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion; but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.
In other words, the police have not been in the business of making specific groups feel loved, but of enforcing the law under the assumption that the laws are what they are, and applying them in the same way to everyone. The police, that is to say, operated within the framework of objective meaning provided by the paternal function. This is what was lost as the legacy of the Macpherson Inquiry.

From that point onward, the Police could not know what they were supposed to do, because the meaning of the laws would be determined by how they were interpreted by segments of public opinion. The injunction placed upon the police was not to ignore public opinion, but to be sensitive and even subordinate to it. And the principle which directed their sensitivity was based on the premise that, left to themselves, they would be seen as racist, which is now implied by enforcing the laws equally. Henceforth, relying on the laws as given would make the Police vulnerable to a charge of racism, and therefore a finding of guilt. By accepting this, the Police undertook to turn their aggression inward against their own enforcement of the laws, instead of expressing their aggression outward in the process of law enforcement.

It was almost inevitable that this would lead to the fatal hesitancy displayed by the Police at the outset of the 2011 riots.

**Conclusion:**

The idea that the paternal function, and indeed the father, can be done without rests on a guarantee, made in the name of the omnipotent mother, that she will take care of us in the absence of objective social order. But there is no such mother and therefore she cannot make good on that guarantee. The destruction of social order finds us not as centres of a loving world, but in utter chaos.

In a way, the idea that the father can be done without is a measure of the father's accomplishments. As we have said, the father represents indifferent reality, and his role encompasses the task of creating and maintaining a boundary between the world of the family, where the love of mother can operate safely, and the outside world of harsh, indifferent, reality.

But through the development of science, technology, and disciplined imagination, all based upon the paternal function, the boundary with reality has been pushed so far away that the very existence of reality has, within the highest circles of the intellect, been called into question. Room has thus been created for a reorganization of society, in the name of the omnipotent mother, that turns desire into demand and undertakes the realization of a utopian fantasy as a programme of concrete political action. It subordinates reality to fantasy and invalidates the constraints that reality would otherwise impose.
But reality will not be mocked. The repressed will return, as it did during the riots of August, 2011.

Endnote¹ We need to be clear about what we are saying and what we are not. We are not saying that any social criticism poses a threat to society. On the contrary, a healthy society is not only not endangered by criticism, it positively needs criticism to stay healthy. The matter here is one of balance; it is the unanimity of negative opinion here that indicates the problem. When Joseph Schumpeter spoke of "creative destruction," he did not mean that destruction, by itself, is creative. He meant that alongside the destructive processes were constructive ones, that could thrive in the space created by the destruction. But creativity flourishes amidst positive feelings about the self, not self-hatred.

REFERENCES

