

The Identity Block: why initiatives towards supranational democracy and governance must incorporate a depth-psychological perspective if they are to succeed

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Abstract

It is beyond argument that solving our world's many pressing problems is in everyone's best interest – yet we humans seem to be voluntarily hurtling towards disaster. Clearly, questions of scale predominate: addressing global issues is beyond the capability of individual states, so new forms of political cooperation have to evolve in order to bypass national impotence, and the search is on. But in an age when *homo sapiens* is busy adapting to countless new technologies, our reluctance to embrace major deep structural change runs against our wired-in instincts for physical survival and is a dangerously regressive puzzle.

Everything changes, however, when we factor in the psychology of *identity* – the greatest driver of our political process and so far barely reckoned with. “Who am I?” is the unstoppable question that automatically occupies the self-reflective neo-cortex: its psychological survival pressure frequently exceeds our more instinctual organismic demands. As social animals, we must satisfy our belonging needs and stratify our world between familiarity and strangeness in order to be safe. This means identity issues dominate our consciousness, whether we are aware of them or not.

“Identity Politics” has become a familiar topic, though it's range and depth is yet uncharted. Depth psychology, however, reveals how we humans unconsciously reject identity propositions that make us uncomfortable and then compartmentalise them or project them onto others in order to maintain psychic equilibrium. This has a profound effect on our politics – witness the latest vogue for demonisation of the foreigner and drawing in the borders. With identity blocks subverting political dialogue, as the current populist mood demonstrates, our ability to affect more than cosmetic change is severely compromised.

It is easy to imagine that it is just the old *traditional* industrial classes, left behind under globalisation, who are driving this. But a deeper analysis reveals that our *modernist* politicians and *postmodernist* intellectuals – equally blind to their own identity blocks - continue a static and polarised, “them-and-us,” political agenda – to all our cost.

We can envisage humanity standing at the threshold of a great transformation in consciousness. Yet if we are to reverse our self-defeating behaviours and engage with our urgent global problems we have to be able to *expand* rather than shrink our identities. In particular, we will need to voluntarily shift our identity from a familiar nation-centrism to the unfamiliarity of a world-centric perspective. No wonder there is some psychological resistance.

This paper will highlight the obstacles to such a transformation and will show how only psychologically informed initiatives towards global governance (such as SIMPOL) can make use of the evolutionary challenges and utilise a full-spectrum political perspective. Only in this way can we apply the necessary democratic leverage that can get us out of the mess we are in – before it is too late.