and unconscious levels, often simultaneously, and participants are encouraged to pay attention to all thoughts and feelings, even the most marginal. The chairperson's task is to create and maintain a non-judgemental atmosphere that can keep the group to its task: that of being curious and receptive to different ideas; of holding seriously thoughts and feelings at the margins of awareness; and of containing difficult emotions and allowing each other to listen, talk, and think without violence or coercion.

This is not to say that Thinking Space is a paradise, that participants do not experience difficult feelings, such as frustration, anger, shame, fear, or disappointment. However, it is the ability to endure these experiences of relative disintegration that can lead to psychic change—to what Bion refers to as the PS–D (paranoid-schizoid–depressive) balance. It is the experience of feeling fear and worrying about being exposed, attacked, even annihilated by others, and then discovering, in interaction, that these fears can be contained, that you can participate and survive, that leads to discovering new knowledge and growth and, with it, the creation of new ideas and meaning. Of course, as in the example above, not every question is answered, and some things are clearly not known. But to acknowledge that one doesn't know is an important type of knowing, and to bear not knowing and be committed to getting to know is an invaluably rich capacity.

Thinking Space is not a neutral or value-free space. It is committed to understanding and learning about racism and other forms of human oppression based on difference, not in the abstract but in ourselves and others. It seeks to do this because with greater knowledge of self and others, we—not just psychotherapists and mental health professionals—are more likely to be aware of our capacity for destructiveness and, in so being, are better equipped to prevent unnecessary harm and suffering for the benefit of all, not just the immediate victims of such hatreds.

Note

1. Bollas (1992) uses the term "object" broadly to include a structure, a place, a group of people, and so forth. I believe that Thinking Space can be internalized as an object that can evoke containment and stimulate unconscious thought. More is said about Bollas's ideas later in this chapter.

Race and our evasions of invitations to think: how identifications and idealizations may prevent us from thinking

Onel Brooks

This chapter argues that our identifications and idealizations often make it very difficult for us to think about most matters, including race. So when we think that we are thinking about race and culture, we may not be; we may be better described as engaged in protecting ourselves, our theories, and our subgroup. Psychotherapy can offer us an easy path to thinking that we are thinking when we are not. To the extent that psychoanalysts and other psychotherapists are busy acting out their own tendencies to idealize, identify, and denigrate—their own tribalism, their own implicit or explicit claim to be better than other psychotherapists—they do not give us reasons to be confident in their ability to think about issues to do with race, for they show that they are caught up in the very issues that they need to be thoughtful about.

This chapter is not part of an attempt to construct a theory or model or some set of generalizations about race, racism, and psychotherapy. Indeed, it indicates the author's misgivings about any such enterprise. For even if some interesting and useful psychotherapeutic theory of race and racism could be constructed, the argument of this chapter would still apply to it, in that this theory or model could easily become a way of evading thoughtful engagement with notions of race, ethnicity, and culture and the part such notions play in what we say, do, and believe.

This chapter claims that there are many ways to decline an invitation to think about race, and that one way of doing this is to talk about race by falling back on our favoured way of talking about it, as we reassure ourselves that we are being thoughtful, when we may not be doing much more than reassuring ourselves and imposing a system of belief or a model on the space where thinking might take place.

If this chapter appears to fail to provide convincing definitions of the terms it uses, and to discuss directly and compellingly notions such as "racism", "the racist", "racist states of mind", "the internal racist", "institutional racism", and so on, it does this partly out of an anxiety that sometimes in being preoccupied with catching the whale, we may trample on and be unable to see the particular flora and fauna, the humble plankton and little fishes that provide the whale with its habitat and renders it mighty. In other words, if this chapter "fails" to discuss such terms, "fails" to try hard to pin them down and make it clear what they really mean, it does so partly out of a fear that in trying to write about how we fail to think, it may, through being focused on such terms, fall foul of what it sets out to identify and consider—namely, our failures to think about difficult matters, and, in particular, matters to do with race, and our tendency to confuse thinking about a matter with repeating what others tend to say about it. This chapter is part of an attempt to value small nets, attentiveness, and patience and to be wary of smothering our thinking in theoretical constructs. However, it may be possible that the reader is misled by talk of "small nets, attentiveness, and patience"; she or her may think that the author is claiming that the only response in situations where race, culture, or any other difference that often evokes discomfort, pain, and indignation is involved is quietism—meek and passive contemplation. This chapter is neither meek nor passive in what it argues. A work that is concerned with our difficulties in thinking is not necessarily a work that claims that there is never a time for action, especially if what, how, and when is carefully thought through. And we must not assume or try to present the issues so that thinking is presented as if it is not a kind of action that is of immense importance in our lives, including in psychotherapy. This chapter is a doing, it is a sustained critique of some tendencies in psychoanalysis that get in the way of our being able to think. It tries

to show or illustrate how our evading or declining our opportunities to think can be violent or can contribute to violence towards others. It should be clear, too, that although this chapter is primarily concerned with notions of race, ethnicity, and culture, what it has to say goes beyond these matters

Wittgenstein's question and invitation

It is 1939 and the most important philosopher of the twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein, is walking by the river in Cambridge with his student and friend, Norman Malcolm, when they see a newsvendor's sign announcing that the German government has accused the British government of being the instigators of the recent attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb. Wittgenstein remarks, "It would not surprise me at all if it were true." Malcolm writes:

> I retorted that I could not believe that the top people in the British government would do such a thing. I mean that the British were too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhand; and I added that such an act was incompatible with the British "national character". My remarks made Wittgenstein extremely angry. He considered it to be a great stupidity and also an indication that I was not learning anything from the philosophical training that he was trying to give me. He said these things very vehemently, and when I refused to admit that my remark was stupid he would not talk to me anymore, and we soon after parted. [Malcolm, 1980, p. 32]

Wittgenstein may not have been the easiest man to get on with, but it is difficult to accuse him of being the sort of man who does not think, and who cares more about keeping his friends happy and maintaining a good opinion of them or himself, rather than about thinking carefully and honestly. Here he does seem to have a point. What was Malcolm thinking? What is "national character" anyway? Do philosophers (or psychotherapists) have the right to throw such terms around, or is philosophy (and psychotherapy) something more like a practice of being scrupulously concerned about what we might mean, imagine, assume, or be trying to do when we reach for such terms? Was the Empire

acquired and retained by "civilized" and "decent" means exclusively? Was he thinking or displaying a reflex, asserting something consistent with his prejudices and idealizations, caught up in what we might want to regard as an imaginary or at least partial picture of what it means to be British? Did Malcolm see *himself* as "civilized" and "decent" and so identified with the essence of being British? (Who was he leaving out of this category? What gets you into this club?) Was it too much of a challenge to his own sense of himself and what he held dear to even consider the accusation for a moment? A space for thinking and talking was not opened up here.

Although this incident did not end their friendship, it ended their practice of going walking together, and it remained an issue between them. Five years later, in 1944, Wittgenstein wrote to Malcolm about this incident and how shocked he was by the "primitiveness" of Malcolm's comments about "national character". (Of course, "primitive" is an interesting term, and hardly unrelated to our discussion.) Wittgenstein wrote to Malcolm:

> I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any . . . journalist in the use of the dangerous phrases such people use for their own ends. You see, I know that it's difficult to think well about "certainty", "probability", "perception", etc. But it is if possible, still more difficult to think, or to try to think, really honestly about your own life & and other peoples' lives. And the trouble is that thinking about these things is not thrilling, but often downright nasty. And when it's nasty then it's most important. . . . You can't think decently if you don't want to hurt yourself. . . . [Malcolm, 1980, pp. 39–40]

Wittgenstein and Nietzsche are very much concerned with how we are easily misled, confused, and seduced by language, ideas, pictures, or images of who we are and what we are doing. They are concerned with how our words, terms, and conceptions muddle and flatter us and often obscure from us what we are doing. Both are ferocious critics of the lazy, the complacent, the fearful, and the formulaic and insist on the importance of thinking honestly,

courageously, and creatively about oneself and others, even if it hurt, even if it means that you find yourself isolated or cast out of the group (Nietzsche, 1887, Sections 2, 319, and 335, for example). For them, thinking is not and cannot be cleverness or fidelity to a set of convictions or a system; thinking involves intellectual integrity, conscience, and moral courage, and it often leads to difficult and uncomfortable places.

Wittgenstein's question addressed to psychoanalytic practitioners might read: what is the point of being able to speak with some plausibility about "the Oedipus complex", "the unconscious", "attacks", "projective identification", "transference", "countertransference", and the like if we do not try to think really honestly about our own lives, the lives of other people, and our relationships with them.

It is not being disputed that some psychoanalysts do try to think honestly about these matters. What is being claimed is that what passes for thinking in psychoanalysis, including thinking about race, often has little to do with intellectual integrity, courage, and being prepared to inhabit uncomfortable places, that what passes for thinking is usually a matter of saying what those in one's group tend to say. What is being claimed here is that where there is a system of thought or beliefs, there is also the danger that it restricts as well as facilitates thought. Where there is a group that may see itself as being in the right (and few groups do not), maintaining their own sense of themselves as the group that is in the right is likely to get in the way of its members being able to think about themselves, others, and the very thing that they claim to be in the right about. Psychoanalysis does not seem to be an exception to this argument. What is being disputed in this chapter is the idea that being psychoanalytically sophisticated or trained enables us to think better about race in particular. Psychoanalytic concepts can help us to think or be used to foreclose thinking.

To take such claims as yet another example of Freud-bashing, as anti-psychoanalysis, is perhaps to demonstrate one of the contentions of this chapter: that it is easy to react in the way that Malcolm reacted in the story above, as if an illegitimate and unwarranted attack is being made on what we hold dear and that, therefore, it must be dismissed rather than thought about.

Self-love or narcissism as an obstacle to thinking

It is 2006 and an important child and adolescent psychotherapist, Anne Horne, is writing about the state of psychoanalysis in Britain. Commenting on "those who would cling to narrower identifications and supposed orthodoxies", Horne tells us that "such 'orthodoxy' brings its own dilemmas". She continues:

> The greatest issue facing psychoanalysis in Britain today, paradoxically, is not the assumed threats from other psychological approaches or even the slowness in establishing an evidence-base. It lies for many of us in the incapacity of the profession to analyse its own tendency to idealization. [Horne, 2006, p. 19]

Horne has interesting and useful things to say about this "pathological idealization", how this is "institutionalized", and how psychoanalytic practitioners can come to depend upon "ideal internal objects". "Such a process", she writes,

> often brings an accompanying reluctance to question the ideas and tenets of one's theoretical forebears and carries with it an assumption that what one is taught are "set" and "right" techniques and principles. [p. 20]

Whether this is the greatest issue facing psychoanalysis today or not, the incapacity of those professionals who regard themselves as psychoanalytic or psychodynamic practitioners to think about their own tendency to idealize and identify with psychoanalysis is certainly an issue, and an issue that can be related to the notion of self-love or narcissism.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) state that identification is a "Psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides" (p. 205). Rycroft (1988) tells us that identification is "The process by which a person either (a) extends his identity into someone else, (b) borrows his identity from someone else, or (c) fuses or confuses his identity with someone else" (Rycroft, p. 67). The idea seems to be that the person feels himself to be extended into the other, to borrow from or be enhanced by or confused with this other person or thing. There is a sense of expanding our sense of who and what we are, of the binding-up of our sense of who and what we are with the acquired qualities of the other person, object, idea, or body of doctrine.

Idealization is a "Mental process by means of which the object's qualities and value are elevated to the point of perfection" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 202); the object is "aggrandised and exalted in the subject's mind" (p. 203). The idealized person or thing needs to be perceived as perfect, and anything that does not fit in with the illusion of perfection must be ignored or denied (Rycroft, 1988, p. 67).

For Klein (1946), the tendency to idealize the good breast is a "characteristic feature of the earliest relation to the good object" (p. 9). Frustration and anxiety, she argues, impels the infant to seek comfort and protection from the good object when anxiety of a persecutory nature is great; but when persecutory anxiety is great, "the flight to the idealized object becomes excessive, and this severely hampers ego-development and disturbs object-relations" (p. 9).

Klein seems to be telling us what the idealized object is needed for, what we seek to bring about by believing in and creating it: she seems to be telling us that we need the ideal object to help us to feel protected from a sense of being persecuted, or, rather, from the fear that we may be attacked, got at, damaged, or destroyed. It beats whistling, or it is a form of whistling when we are afraid of the dark and lurking bogeys. It is a comforting illusion; however, by writing that it "severely hampers ego-development and disturbs object-relations", Klein might be read as telling us that idealization provides us with some comfort but it helps to prevent us from growing up and relating to others. Helping others to grow up and relate to other people might be one way of talking about what we might hope for from psychoanalysis. We might be concerned that it seems that psychoanalysts, too, are sometimes caught up in their own comforting illusions and may have trouble growing up and relating to others.

Narcissism, Laplanche and Pontalis helpfully tell us, is "love directed towards the image of oneself" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 255), and referring to Lacan, they describe narcissism as "the amorous captivation of the subject by [his own] image" (p. 256). It refers to self-love and a love of oneself in which what is loved is not what one is, but very much caught up in how we would like to see ourselves, in our defence against our sense of loss and other pains, including our defence against our potential for coming to know how we are not as perfect and as loveable as we might like to see ourselves.

Freud (1930a) allows us to hear a narcissistic voice when in his discussion of the injunction "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", he remarks, "He deserves it if he is so like me in important ways that I can love myself in him; and he deserves it if he is so much more prefect than myself that I can love my ideal of my own self in him" (p. 109). Here Freud seems to be telling us that the supposed love of the other can be but a path to self-love. A little later in this work, he observes that "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestation of their aggressiveness". This is said in the context of his discussing "the narcissism of minor differences", where he seems to be saying something about how it is people who are physically close to each other and similar to each other who are locked in rivalry with each other, and apparently wanting to see themselves as different to and better than the other group (Freud, 1930a, p. 114).

In speaking of narcissism or self-love, we are speaking about our identifications and idealizations, our comforting illusions, and our refusal to be more aware of what might puncture or deflate our imaginary picture of ourselves. In idealizing psychoanalysis and holding on to the fantasy that we are identified with it, and therefore share in its perfection, we do not put ourselves in the position to think about psychoanalysis, race, or anything else.

Trans-ideological acknowledgement and beyond

From Horne's comments—and not only from them—we might get the impression that the "narcissism of small differences" is still a feature of the psychoanalytic world. She quotes Gregorio Kohon as reminding us that in the world of British psychoanalysis, "analysts would never be found quoting from colleagues of any of the rival groups". This might be regarded as remarkable, if it means, as it seems to, that Kleinians would not be found quoting contemporary Freudians or ego psychologists or that Freudians find it too difficult to acknowledge that a follower of Klein or someone who thinks of herself as Winnicottian, and therefore an Independent, has something interesting to say. Horne also quotes Eric Rayner as acknowledging that between psychoanalysts "there is frequent acrimony about group-ideo-

logical matters". Horne seems to be making a plea for "trans-ideological acknowledgement of sources" (Horne, 2006, p. 21). She seems to mean that psychoanalytically trained practitioners should be generous enough to acknowledge when they have read something interesting or useful but written by a psychoanalytically trained practitioner who is not actually a part of their own school of psychoanalysis, their own subgroup. As well as joining Horne in this hope for some generosity between the subgroups or schools of psychoanalysis, we might want to go further and urge what may be referred to as extra-ideological acknowledgements of sources and influences, the perhaps audacious idea that we might be able to acknowledge that psychotherapists who do not belong to the same subgroup as us through training—including psychotherapists who do not consider themselves to be "psychoanalytic" and writers who do not identify themselves as psychotherapists—often have interesting and useful things to say.

The voices from outside psychoanalysis are interesting and useful to the practice of psychotherapy. A diet of what is said and written in our own subgroup tends to lead to our saying what those around us tend to say, but to pride ourselves on our thoughtfulness. We cannot take it that a person who has a narcissistic attachment to psychoanalysis or one of its subgroups, who identifies with its teachings, dogmas, and celebrities, a person who idealizes psychoanalysis, is a useful person to turn to when we are concerned with how the notion of race can frequently contribute to restrictions to our regard for others, apply the brakes on our capacity for reverie—our being able to allow thoughts to come to us—and dull our appreciation of our relatedness to others, for such a person is caught up in what we need to think about. By being caught up in denigrating "them" and idealizing "us", we do not offer grounds for confidence in our ability to think about race or any other difference between people. Whatever else may be said to be involved in racism, it seems plausible to state that thinking in terms of them and us tends to be part of it.

Some of us practitioners of psychotherapy seem to find comfort in feeling ourselves to belong to a small group or sect, practitioners who are faithful to the right ideas, who hold our convictions, who are sufficiently like them. Wittgenstein and Nietzsche might argue that this safety in sameness, this longing to belong to the people who are right, cannot be taken as an indication that we have much

in the way of intellectual integrity, moral courage, and the ability to inhabit unpleasant, uncomfortable, and lonely places. We might wonder whether there is any indication that we are able to think about anything and be concerned that there is something partial, a bias about belonging to a group of people in this way, a way of binding oneself to others, as long as there are others to hate, denigrate, and feel superior to others who are regarded as "different".

Where Horne writes about "The Independents", that group of psychoanalysts who see themselves as somewhere between Freud and Klein, she speaks of their adopting "a very British position" by compromising in the face of disputes; "we", she writes, "do not seem to be creatures of extremes" (Horne, 2006, p. 18). Here again, we might argue, are issues to do with identification, idealization, and narcissism, the very issues Horne is discussing. A picture or image is held of what it means to be British, and it might be very gratifying for us to think of ourselves as belonging to this group when it is seen in this way. This might remind us of Wittgenstein and Malcolm in 1939. Perhaps a less idealized and narcissistic picture of what it means to be British—one that is from what we might refer to as a more "depressive position"—might dare to include some acknowledgement that along with a talent for compromise in some situations, there have also been "extremes", including domination and intransigence. For this is also a country that beheaded a king, played a major part in the slave trade, created and maintained an empire (and not solely, presumably, due to its ability to compromise), excelled at gunboat diplomacy, and sometimes attacked other countries for gain. Britannia did not rule the waves simply through her talent for compromise. We might find ourselves, with an eye on Wittgenstein's question above, asking what is the point of studying psychotherapy and being able to think well about notions such as defence, projection, projective identification, narcissism, displacement, transference, and so on if, when it comes down to it, we are at least as likely to project, displace, omit what is inconvenient to remember or acknowledge, discriminate against others, and be narcissistically involved with the ideas rather than think about them? What is the use, Wittgenstein might prompt us to ask, of so much analysis, supervision, and study of psychoanalytic concepts if we are still so clearly caught up within an imaginary view of what we are, what we belong to, and how other people are deficient? Wittgenstein and Nietzsche might say that there is little

here that resembles thinking; little that indicates conscientiousness, a willingness to go where it is "downright nasty" to be; and much that indicates that safety, security, and comfort inside the party is what is being sought.

Anyway, who might we be talking about when we claim to be able to compromise? Who do we want to say is incapable of being reasonable? All of us who have been trained as psychoanalytic practitioners ought to be familiar with the idea that we can ascribe to the external world "things that clearly originate in his own ego and ought to be acknowledged by it" (Freud, 1930a, p. 56). When we think we are talking about others, we may be talking about ourselves. This might prompt us to watch our tendency to imply that other people are extremists, dogmatic, and unable to be rational and ourselves be more concerned about whether we are the other people of whom we speak.

It is not clear why we might think that race is something that will yield up its secrets only to our subgroup, tribe, or preferred colleagues. Nor is it clear why a group of people who are narcissistically attached to their own groups and theories will be able to see and love anything other than themselves and the theories they are so identified with that these theories serve as extensions and paths back to themselves. Why might we not suspect that often when we claim to be talking about race, we may be seen as talking about and talking to ourselves, using our favoured terms and ideas?

Evading and accepting the invitation to think about race in practice in institutions

This chapter is not concerned with advancing or refuting theories, but with the argument that our attachment to our theories, our group, and our image of ourselves as thoughtful practitioners may make it difficult for us to be able to think about any issue, including race. The second part of this chapter focuses on illustrations of how, in practice, opportunities to think about race are evaded, declined, or accepted.

I am the only black man working in a therapeutic community for "emotionally disturbed adolescents". Early one morning we learn that a group of boys have just absconded, so I, along with two of my male colleagues, whom I like very much and get on well with,

go with two boys to look for the missing residents. We spot them in a field, climb over the fence, and give chase. It is apparently quite good-natured. All the boys are caught, and we walk back to the fence to climb over. I have a good relationship with the boy I have caught, in so far as this boy has good relationships with anyone. He is laughing and joking, and we are the last to climb over the fence to return to the community. Suddenly this boy begins to scream abuse and threats at one of my colleagues and reaches with his right hand into the breast pocket of his jacket. Instantly convinced that he is reaching for a knife, I find that I have clamped my right hand on his right hand, thereby preventing him from producing the knife. He is struggling, swearing at me now, and trying to hit me, but I have him firmly and won't let go. I think that any minute now my colleagues will jump over the fence and help me hold on to him to make the situation safe. This does not happen. We slip, fall, and roll around in the mud: I end up on the bottom but I still have my right hand clamped on his so that he cannot use the knife. I am thinking, "In a minute now . . . In a minute now . . . Any minute now". In fact, neither colleague climbs over. Two of the other boys come to help us, and together we take the knife from the boy who is threatening to use it. I am left feeling suspicious, betrayed, and confused. Where were my colleagues? Why had they not helped me? I am unable to speak to them about this, and they seem unable to say anything to me about it. It is as if I am unable to think about it clearly, as if something shameful has happened, or might happen if I managed to think more clearly about it.

Around that time I begin to notice that the large axe, with the long handle, which is usually kept under lock and key in the shed, tends to be in the sleeping-in room when it is my turn to sleep in. I make enquires about why it is there and who is leaving it there, but I am unable to clear up this mystery: no one owns up, and no one knows anything. I ask some of my colleagues whether the axe has been left in the room when it is their time to sleep in; they tell me that this has not happened. Sometimes, if things are hectic, I just hide it under the bed rather than take it back to the shed in the night, and I return it in the morning. However, the next time I arrive to do a sleep-in, it is there again.

This is a period in which there are many violent incidents, especially at night. One night one of the larger boys threatens to beat up one of the smaller boys. I put myself between the two boys,

and looking up at the aggressor—because he is taller than me!—tell him that he was not going to hit anyone. He insists that I cannot stop him. No one can. And he threatens to flatten me too. Another boy is egging him on. The senior member of staff sends me to the sleeping-in room. I do as I am told, although I think it is a mistake and that if adolescent boys such as the boy making the threats are not firmly met by the adults, they often get drunk on their feeling of omnipotence, as well as frightened, and this is sometimes disastrous for them and those around them. This thought came from an understanding of Winnicott's work and a number of incidents where adolescent omnipotence led to difficult and unpleasant incidents. I also dislike bullying and being bullied.

As I walk into the sleeping-in room, there is the axe looking at me. The noise level and the atmosphere in the house speak of an orgy of violence to come. In my impotence to do anything to prevent this, I have an image of my standing there in front of the two boys, axe in hand, frightening them into behaving. I smile to myself, think that this is crazy and that I have to take this image to supervision. I hide the axe under the bed, sit down, and try to think about what is going on. The sounds of things being smashed, people screaming and running makes me decide that my being sent to my room, as if I am the aggressor, no longer stands, so I follow the noise. Outside, the boy who was being threatened has clearly been hit, the senior member of staff is trying to restrain and calm the boy who was threatening to do the hitting, and the boy who had been doing the egging-on has a huge gatepost in his hand and is just going from window to window smashing every pane of glass with it. I approach him, call him by his name, and say that's enough! Stop! He suddenly turns to me and lifts the gatepost, as if to cave my skull in with it. I react by grabbing him, putting him on the floor, and taking the post from him, so that he cannot use it to damage me or anyone or anything else. I hold up the weapon, as one might hold up a book or pen or some other object that one is talking about, call him by his name, and say, feeling disbelief, "I can't believe that you would have hit me with *this*!" I have a good relationship with this boy and know that he will punch and kick me in anger, but I feel very shocked and upset that he would do something that might kill me. The boy looks frightened and says that he was not going to hit me with it, he was just trying to scare me.

I learn the next day that the senior member of staff had said to the other senior staff that the most frightening time for her was to see a member of staff who is usually so calm, dependable, and laid back standing over one of the boys with a huge post in his hand, about to do him some serious damage with it. Fortunately, she continued, he managed to restrain himself. I am dumbstruck. I am again the threat rather than the one threatened. Again I feel betrayed and as if my actions and my sense of who I am are sucked into and swept along in a scenario I did not write or authorize and from which there is no escape.

In our staff group, the colleague who was the target of the threats and abuse at the fence, when I was rolling around in the mud on my own with the boy who was reaching for his knife, says that he is tempted to say that he did not climb over, as he could have done in seconds and usually would do, because if the boy wanted to attack him, it would be better if he did not try to hold on to the boy. He adds, however, that he can be more honest than this. The boy had been giving him hell for weeks, and he had had enough. He confessed to having the urge to do violence to this boy and to having the thought that if I am left alone with an angry boy who is waving a knife around, I might have to hit or beat him up, in order to protect myself. He said he was hoping that being left in this dangerous situation would lead to my doing for him what he was just about preventing himself from doing. This helped me to make sense of my suspicions as well as my confusion and sense of betrayal. Race was not mentioned. My suspicions involved thoughts and feelings about race, but I thought it wise not to raise it yet.

I mentioned in that group that this axe kept on appearing in the sleeping-in room when it was my turn to sleep in, but apparently not when others are sleeping in, and that the axe had been there again on the night when the house was smashed up and a number of people were hit. The facilitator was visibly alarmed. She told me that a number of my colleagues had been to see her privately, claiming that they were at the end of what they could take and sharing their fantasies about seriously injuring one of the young people. She told me never to sleep with the axe under my bed and claimed that she thought that I was being set up to act out something for the staff group: the one who injures one of the young people. She added that she did not think that it was coincidental that I was

the only black man on the staff group, and that my being offered and egged on into this position may have much to do with some unconscious things about race.

I felt relief that she had spoken openly about race and that it was less easy to dismiss me as being a bit mad or having "a chip on my shoulder" if I then spoke about race.

A number of points can be made about these experiences. First, I am not accusing my former colleagues of being racist, insensitive, or therapeutically unsophisticated—I am claiming that they were quite the opposite. Yet the incidents I have related happened, and I found it extremely difficult to talk about race and was, for a time, left feeling set up and vulnerable.

Second— and this is a crucial point—if colleagues who are psychotherapeutically sophisticated and prepared in many ways to be honest, who like me as I am fond of them, can manoeuvre me into situations where they hope I will do their violence for them, and if this has something to do with my colour, then how often does this happen in institutions, sophisticated psychotherapeutically or not, in businesses, in schools, with people who are less able or less prepared to be so honest?

Third, it is crucial to emphasize that the organization *did* address race through the consultant it employed. It would be unrealistically stringent to claim that a good organization is one in which issues to do with race, or any other difficult issue, for that matter, never arise; the question is whether these issues can be spoken about and responded to thoughtfully, rather than the organization or its individual members reacting with indignation and denial whenever there is any suggestion that race may be an issue. It is crucial for an organization to have spaces for thinking together that are spaces for thinking together, rather than spaces for persuading itself that all is well, others are deluded, and it is always someone else who is at fault.

Fourth, some years later, I tried to speak to my analyst about the knife and the axe and other issues that seem to be related. She was quick to make a case for it having little or nothing to do with race, but a lot to do with my being a fit and strong young man at the time. Yes—but I was certainly not the only man there who was fit and strong. What concerned me about my analyst's response was both its speed and its dismissal of race, together with an apparent conviction that I was really talking about my Oedipus complex

and my concerns about *her* racism. Her apparent confidence that she knew that what I was saying about race was a code for oedipal matters and the transference made me feel as if she was not able to listen and think with me about this matter but had to dismiss it for supposedly "deeper" issues that she, in many ways, felt more comfortable with.

It is important to say that her taking my reflections on these incidents as a code about the transference led to my no longer talking about these incidents but about my relationship with her and the thought that I was covertly accusing her of being racist. We might say that I had the impression that she did not want to talk about my memories of a time in my life when I was doing something very difficult alongside colleagues whom I am still fond of; she wanted me to talk about the transference.

Finally, it could be said that her remarks were blunt instruments when something more delicate was needed. Why would she take up my telling her about these experience as my concerns about her racism rather than as possibly about her being someone who might not help me when I needed help (when I am struggling with a boy who has a knife), or as someone who might treat me as if I am the aggressor when I am being threatened (as I felt at the time that the senior member of staff did)? Why, indeed, might she not have made a comment about my wondering whether she would be like the group facilitator, who was clear and direct about what she thought was going on, and whom I experienced as helpful and caring? Her belief in her own model, her apparent conviction that she knew what I was talking about and why, long before I had any thoughts about what and why, meant that she was not able to think with me nor allow me to think.

It has nothing to do with race

I am one of two black men in an organization in which psychoanalysis is the dominant model. Two black women join the organization in junior positions; I supervise one of them. The other black man is my manager. After a number of months without anything out of the ordinary being apparent to me, my supervisee suddenly declares that she and the other black woman are taking out a "sexual harassment" grievance against the other black man; however, as they are

afraid of him, she wants me to ask him to meet with them now and to be there when they tell him this. I am stunned and feel myself to be in a difficult position. I feel even more so when I learn that both of these black women have been supported in their decision to take this step by a white woman in the organization, who has a history with this black manager. I am concerned that through their discussions with her, the language is now "sexual harassment" and "grievance procedure"; it is not that there is something about what he has done or the way he is that they need to talk to him about. I protest about not being included at all in any of the discussions and suddenly being put in this position. My supervisee reminds me that I am a man (not something I had forgotten) and am perceived as friends with this man. I inform her that we are not unfriendly to each other, but we are hardly "friends". Where does the idea come from that we are friends? It seemed to have a lot to do with our being the only two black men in the organization. Well, it could have been worse: they might have decided that we were related!

I do what I can to help these two women to air their grievances to the man they are accusing, hoping, stupidly maybe, that we might think together about the situation. No argument is being made here that there is never a time or a situation in which grievance procedures need to be resorted to. But Wittgenstein's question haunts. For what is the use of studying psychoanalysis, having psychoanalytic supervision, and being in psychoanalytic therapy, as I and some of my colleagues were and had been for some time, if we do not try to talk to the people around us about our feelings, our thoughts, and our relationships with them? If we skip talking to each other and just take out grievance procedures? However, as I go to get him, my being given no time to think about it, and my inviting him to a meeting so that he can be accused publicly, make me feel as if I have been set up to do the dirty work and am caught up in a well-spun web.

Although he comes to the meeting, looking puzzled and asking what it is about, the women are unable to tell him what they experienced him as doing, and they flee from the meeting. Things escalate very quickly. I find myself in the director's office.

The director, a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, claims that as the two women accusing the black man of sexual harassment are black, race cannot be a factor. Politely, I ask her if this follows, and after a while and a little thought, she acknowledges that it does not.

I wonder what she is thinking or if she is thinking: surely many things go on between black people that are about race and racism! Any thought of mentioning that there is a white woman involved, who for years has been making comments about this manager's incompetence and her ability to do a better job than he does, leaves me when I begin to realize that I am being cross-examined and accused.

Why and how did you manage to turn a blind eye to this for so long? Did you not want to see it? I explained that my supervisee had not mentioned it until the day she asked me to invite him to meet with us; I had certainly experienced them as being quite flirtatious together, with quite a bit of sexual banter, but I saw no indication that she was upset by it and had no reason to raise it with her. "Well, were you part of it?" No! "Why not?" (Strange question: now I feel as if I have to produce a justification of why I have not harassed my supervisee or behaved in such a way that she might feel harassed by me.) It was, I said, because I generally don't get into that sort of banter at work, and it seemed to be clearly inappropriate with a young woman I am supervising. She then tells me that I had wanted to do it too but felt unable to because of my position. She even speculates that I had projected my desire to abuse my position with this young woman into my manager, who had acted this out for me. Puzzled, confused, and aware that I might be said to be in no position to speak for my unconscious, aware that disagreement can easily be termed "denial", and not at all convinced about her right to use interpretations in this way in this situation, I find myself simply stating that this is not so and pointing out that the young woman would not have come to me for help if she had felt that I was part of it.

I was unhappy with my responses and the way I had handled the whole matter. Part of my unhappiness lies in the thought that my own self-love, my vanity, was very much involved in how things turned out. Perhaps it was omnipotent of me to react to being told about a group of women taking out a grievance procedure against a black male colleague by thinking that I could and should do something to get the people involved to talk to each other about how they relate to each other. Perhaps my image of myself as someone who sorts things out and gets to the bottom of things was in that situation problematic, for I did not give enough thought to the possibility that I was being invited into

something from which there was no escape and that, because I am a black man, I would be likely to be seen as being in league with the other black man.

My self-interest, too, could be said to have asserted itself when on realizing that I was being accused, I abandoned all thought of being part of trying to clear the matter up and found that I was trying to save my own skin, rather than trying to help us to appreciate the significance that seemed to be attributed to possessing such skin.

It also dawned on me slowly after the event that had I refused to help these women to arrange a meeting with the accused man, had I simply told my manager what my supervisee had told me but refused to be a part of the meeting, this might have been taken as an indication by the director and the rest of the organization that I was in league with him. It does not seem to have been a situation that I could emerge from unscathed.

It could be said that psychoanalytic concepts were used in a way that was abusive to both of the black men, and perhaps all the people concerned, because they prevented thinking and enabled speculation driven more by concepts and ideas and the organization's desire not to think about race and the complex situation between individuals.

It can also be said that what happened misused psychoanalysis. No argument is being made here that race was the only factor, but although I attempted to stop the director quickly dismissing race as a factor in the accusation, it was dismissed, and yet it seemed to persist in the notion that the two black men in the organization were probably in it together. The speed at which race was dismissed, and the use of a theoretical model to implicate and accuse me and to frame this whole experience, meant, I contend, that this whole incident could not really be thought about. The institution had no space or will to think about race and found a way to dismiss it as an important factor, while it appeared to be doing a lot of work.

Nearly twenty years later I ran into the director at an event where there were mainly psychotherapists. Perhaps I do not need to say that there are usually very few black people at these events. I went over to say "Hello". Her response was something like, "Oh I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure. All black people look the same to me. I know that it is not politically correct to say this, but I am going to say it anyway."

It is possible to utter such a sentence while believing that we are substantiating the claim that we are able to think for ourselves, in spite of "political correctness" and other fetters to our freedom of thought. This is to identify with those people who have swum against the current bravely, the group of people who have put their own integrity and need to speak the truth above what is prudent and common in their time. However, this seems as if it is an indication of someone who is amorously captivated by her own image of herself: when we express ourselves in clichés, we might be suspicious about whether we are thinking and brave and are in the same company as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Freud, or Ferenczi. Furthermore, it is easy to understand how an English person who has just arrived in China, and has hardly ever seen Chinese people, might have difficulties distinguishing between the people she sees, but not so easy to understand how a person who has lived and worked with black people in London as colleagues and clients for over thirty years might say this. It took me some time before it occurred to me that this was part of the problem then and still is her and our problem now: black people are seen as part of a mass term, not individual people, and they are, therefore interchangeable.

What, we might ask, is the use of studying and practising psychoanalysis in London for many years, and being able to talk about the unconscious, denial, hostility, and attacks, if, far from being interested in, embarrassed, or appalled by your inability to recognize other people, you actually turn this into a source of pride, an apparent refusal to be cowed by something called "political correctness"? It is difficult to see how an opportunity to think about race might be accepted for someone who seems to be so proud of her difficulties with it.

Conclusion

The author of this chapter cannot claim that he is outside of self-love and its seductions, or that he does not belong to any groups, has no colleagues or friends, and does not admire any thinker or other therapist. The examples above indicate that he is caught up in the difficulties of thinking about race and that there are many groups that he may see himself as being involved with. The argu-

ment of this chapter is not that we can escape from self-love into some objective selfless perspective on ourselves and others, or that we must not in any way be involved with, admire, or be identified with others. This chapter argues that the issue is whether we are able to begin to think about our self-love and narcissistic attachments, to take a more thoughtful and sceptical position to claims about right and wrong ways of seeing things and, in particular, the claim that our particular group must be in the right. The issue is whether we can worry more about the possibility that, when we think that we are thinking about race, or anything else for that matter, we may not be thinking.

There are at least two possible criticisms of this chapter. The first is that the illustrations used are too revealing. A wiser or more prudent man would have disguised the material and written about his "supervisee" or "client". This would have worked: the material could have been used in this way. Having presented the material in the way I have presented it exposes me. Others can now analyse the material and pronounce on my pathology or feel that they are in a position to tell me how I should have handled these situations differently (and their knowledge of who is "ill" and how they are ill, and how matters should be handled, often has much to do with what those in their sub-group tend to say and write). Furthermore, and this is the second criticism, the reader might not believe that what I have reported happened. I have no interest in preventing people from expressing their opinions and reactions, but it does need to be pointed out that to write a paper that comments on the lack of intellectual honesty, courage, and willingness to occupy uncomfortable positions in some psychoanalysis, and yet to pretend that my experiences belong to a "client", "supervisee", or "friend", is obviously problematic. If this practice is widespread in psychoanalysis, and it has been since Freud, this seems to support the argument of this chapter. Finally, as for that reader not believing what he has read, what needs to be said here is that this reader might consider whether this might be his way of evading or declining the invitation to think that this chapter constitutes.