THE POSSIBLE “NEWTONIAN” ORIGIN” OF “BEYOND PSYCHOANALYSIS”?

“Respecting specific areas of our more original insights into the etiology and treatment of certain stubborn problems of psychopathology, there have been admittedly some partial explorations in the same direction by a minority of professionals outside our work – notably among factions directly or indirectly associated with the viewpoint of the late Harry Sullivan [emphasis added]. However even these more advanced psychoanalysts have been limited both theoretically and practically by their want of a fundamental grounding of psychoanalysis to replace the crippling old Freudian meta-psychology and its parodies. Our fundamental contribution to psychoanalysis as such is essentially located in our establishment of a fundamental theory of mind, [emphasis in the original] through which the necessary reification and coherence can be secured for a variety of otherwise ambiguous and abortive advances in methods and etiological tools of clinical work.

In the spring of 1973, Lyndon LaRouche began introducing his “Beyond Psychoanalysis” (BP) project to transform the NCLC in a series of internal documents such as “Mothers Fears” and “The Challenge of Left Hegemony.” The publication of these texts also coincided with the NCLC’s launching of “Operation Mop-Up” against the Communist Party (CPUSA).

LaRouche’s decision to launch BP in the midst of an incredible internal crisis inside the NCLC may seem puzzling at first. In retrospect, it appears quite likely that LaRouche intended to take advantage of the intense anxiety felt inside the NCLC over a policy that had been quite literally sprung on the members virtually overnight without any internal deliberation and turn this anxiety towards his own benefit. In short, it seems clear then that both Operation Mop-Up and BP were part of a larger project to make to transform the sect into a political cult with LaRouche as its unchallenged new “philosopher-king.”

Yet where did LaRouche himself get the basis for his BP theories?

In this appendix, I will suggest that one possible source for LaRouche’s ideas may be found in the writings and activity of a strange group of leftist “therapists” who had been highly active in New York from the late 1950s onward and who maintained a strong presence in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. They were known as “Sullivans” in tribute to the teachings of the well known American psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan who died in 1949.

The “Sullivans,” however, only emerged in the late 1950s. The group was centered on two former CPUSA members -- Jane Pearce and Saul Newton. They first articulated their ideas on their one book, _The Conditions of Human Growth (CHG)_ , a 400-page plus tome first published by Lyle Stuart’s Citadel Press in 1963. There are two very striking aspects to Pearce and Newton’s work that seem to echo in BP. First, they focused on the role of the mother as the primary agent for inculcating “bourgeois ideology” in children. Second, as part of their “therapy,” Pearce and Newton stressed the necessity for their “patients” to make a complete and total break with their parents.

In 2003 Amy Siskind -- a former member of the Sullivans whose mother joined the group when Amy Siskind was a child—published a study of the Sullivans based on her earlier Ph.D. research. Siskind’s book -- _The
**Sullivan Institute/Fourth Wall Community: The Relationship of Radical Individualism and Authoritarianism** -- was published by Praeger Press. In it Siskind extensively documents the rise and fall of the Sullivanians and makes it perfectly clear that the group was a weird left wing totalitarian “therapy cult” controlled by one man, Saul Newton throughout its entire history.

**FREUD, FROMM, AND SULLIVAN**

In reading LaRouche, it is striking that there are only two American psychoanalysts he mentions favorably (along with Lawrence Kubie). They were Eric Fromm and Harry Stack Sullivan. LaRouche fancied himself an interpreter of both Freud and Marx and as far back as the early 1960s he reviewed a work by Fromm for the SWP’s *International Socialist Review* and even gave a talk on Fromm for the SWP’s New York-based Labor Forum. Other members in LaRouche’s SWP circle also became interested in this project as well. Murry Weiss, a leading SWP member who was particularly close to LaRouche’s then wife Janice, was also very interested in the Marx-Freud relationship. After dropping out of the SWP in 1964, Weiss became a psychotherapist. LaRouche’s wife Janice also was interested in psychology and she went on to become a business consultant who specialized in counseling women who were entering the business world.

In this context it is important to recall that in the wake of the “thaw” after the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, *Marx’s Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* first appeared in an English translation. Soon there would be a great deal of attention given the writings of the “young Marx” who stressed issues like alienation. The ideas of the “young Marx” would prove critical for the emerging “New Left” in Eastern and Western Europe as well as the United States. Eric Fromm -- who had been associated with the leftist Frankfurt School in the 1920s and 30s -- soon became the leading English-language interpreter both of the “young Marx” as well as a highly proponent advocate of the need to develop some kind of intellectual synthesis that could incorporate the ideas of Marx and Freud.

LaRouche’s interest in Sullivan seems to have been based on the fact that in the 1940s Sullivan’s ideas had attracted a group of “left Freudians” including Eric Fromm and his ex-wife Frieda Fromm-Reichman. In order to understand
why, some brief history of Freudianism in America is necessary to grasp why Sullivan was seen as a kind of “missing link” between Marx and Freud.

In the 1940s a series of debates blossomed in American Freudian circles over the origins of neurotic behavior. While orthodox Freudians stuck to ideas about the ego, id, and superego as well as instinctual drives as central to understanding human psychology, one small dissident faction began to stress the importance of the social environment. Karen Horney led the attack. She argued that social and cultural factors -- and not just “biological” drives -- were key to the creation of neurosis.

In 1941 Horney and a few other analysts walked out of the orthodox New York Psychoanalytic Society and created their own organization, The American Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis. Both Harry Stack Sullivan and Eric Fromm were given status as honorary members. Then in 1943, Fromm left Horney’s group and together with Sullivan formed the New York City branch of the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation.

PEARCE AND NEWTON

The “left Freudian” approach stressed the social role of the environment as against instinctual drives. One of Sullivan’s students, Jane Pearce, was an M.D. and a former member of the American Communist Party. While working at the William Alanson White Institute in the 1950s, Pearce met Saul Newton whom she later married. Newton had absolutely no background or training in psychiatry. When he met Pearce, Newton was working in the bursar’s office of the Institute. Yet Newton would become the critical figure in the events to follow.

Saul Newton came from a Jewish working class background. Like Pearce, he had been a member of the CPUSA. In the 1930s, Newton was a member of the Lincoln Brigades in Spain and he later served in World War II. For reasons that remain unclear, Newton formally broke with the CPUSA sometime after World War II. Siskind, however, points out that in the 1980s, Newton’s then wife, Joan Harvey, produced a play entitled Ride a Red Horse about three generations of radicals. In this play, the CPUSA comes under criticism for abandoning the Popular Front policy of the 1930s and veering off
into left sectarianism in the 1950s. Siskind then comments: “Although it is not verifiable it is possible to guess that Newton may have left the Party over the Foster/Browder split right after World War II.” (Siskind, 101)

Newton, however, seems to have remained an unreconstructed Stalinist authoritarian in his personal politics. He loved to act like a thug and he once threatened the writer Richard Elman that he would put a “contract” out on him should Elman challenge the Sullivians in a custody battle. (Elman devotes a chapter to Newton in his book *Namedropping: Mostly Literary Memoirs*, published by SUNY Press in 1998).

Siskind reports that according to people who knew him in the late 1950s, Newton was

- charismatic, intimidating, and sexually voracious. He was also a self-described communist who had taken part in partisan fighting against Trotskyites during the Spanish civil war – bragging that he had killed Trotskyites as well as fascists. He often made publicly violent threats, and according to direct observation and reports of ex-members, he practiced both verbal and physical violence against women. (Siskind, 148)

Newton also liked to brag that he was very good when it came to murder.

**THE DOCTRINE**

Whatever their reasons for leaving the CPUSA, both Newton and Pearce “viewed themselves as disseminators of Sullivan’s theories, but they also envisioned their work as a radicalization of his ideas.” (Siskind, 29) For our purposes, the most striking aspects of Pearce and Newton theories are 1) their views on mothers and the role they play in particular in capitalist society and 2) Newton and Pearce’s justification and use of deliberately generated intense anxiety in their patients for “therapeutic” purposes.

On the family and mothers in general, Siskind points out:

> One of the clearest points of theoretical difference between Sullivan and Pearce and Newton(PN from now on) was PN’s stipulation that
conventional marriage is simply a continuation of the social isolation of the mother-infant dyad, and can be destructive to the individual's further growth. . . PN also viewed parents in general, and mothers more specifically, as “donors of the status quo.” (Siskind, 30)

PN also deliberately promoted feelings of deep anxiety in their patients. Unlike Sullivan -- who believed it was dangerous to push a person in this way because it could lead to a psychotic breakdown – PN argued that anxiety was not necessarily to be avoided. In a 1970 paper they wrote: “What's wrong with most therapy is that it is not oriented towards evoking anxiety in the patient. . . . You must trust the proposition that growth is more important than anxiety.” PN went on to assert:

In Sullivan's system, the avoidance of anxiety was considered a need on the same level as other needs. This is one of the major divergences from Sullivan’s theory that we have developed. We do not believe in the avoidance of anxiety.

In a 1970 paper, PN also argued:

[Sullivan] did extensive research into conditions that might lead to a positive outcome of an acute psychotic episode. Similar methods are being applied by many people who are trying to organize therapeutic communities. Some of the most effective of these applications can be seen in experiments in communal living. These experiments abide by the admonitions: “Hang together!” “Keep talking! “Don't worry about eerie experiences!” “Protect against impulsive suicide!” “Maintain adequate manpower!” “Never do it alone!” (Siskind, 41-2)

Indeed, expressions of anxiety could be seen as signals that the person was undergoing “real” growth. In Siskind's words, Pearce and Newton believed that ends could justify means. For them, the means of personality change in many cases was action first, understanding second. If an individual took certain actions, even if he or she did not want to or believe they would help, the results would show that the actions were warranted. (Siskind, 32)
By the late 1960s, PN were isolated and ostracized from the rest of the mainstream psychoanalytic profession and they were increasingly viewed as engaged in unethical practices. In an unpublished 1970 paper, PN further distanced themselves from their mainstream colleagues attacking Freud's views as “deeply pessimistic” about human nature and, as such, they argued that Freud’s views helped justify the “capitalist establishment.”

THE “CENTRAL PARANOIA”

Siskind description of PN’s focus on the mothers is worth quoting at length:

For PN, the mother is the first agent of repression in life, and the vehicle by which capitalism as a system creates the ideal capitalist citizen/consumer. Only those needs of the infant that she responds to will be met and become conscious; all others will be repressed by the child. This belief in the mother's ability to hamper her child's development extended to the physiological maturation process as well as the psychological. Many patient-members of the SI/FW community were told that their physiological problems were due to early maternal rage, which was directed toward them simply because they were “alive,” while the mothers were thought to be generally “depressed” or “dead.” Unless other significant adults who would respond to the child's needs are accessible (“alternate validators” in Sullivan’s terms), the child’s growth will be limited. This ontological “fact” is then elaborated into a theory of personality based on three interacting systems: the self-system, the central paranoia, and the integral personality. (Siskind, 33)

The “central paranoia” according to PN is due to the infant being unable to “reconcile the difference between his or her mother when she is loving and responsive and when she is angry and distant.” Thus in their book The Conditions of Human Growth, PN develop the idea of the “Good and Bad Mother.”

As for anxiety, PN argued that there were two kinds. The bad kind of anxiety would limit one's growth. For example, an infant whose mother became extremely anxious while breast-feeding could develop digestive problems because her anxiety would interfere with digestion. (Siskind, 34) However
the anxiety generated when someone was trying something new “to acquire a new function that would have evoked anxiety in their parent(s)” was to be seen as positive.

In the 1960s, PN wrote a paper entitled “Establishment Psychiatry – and a Radical Alternative” in which they argued that traditional notions of mental health were based on acceptance of the status quo. Most strikingly, they “advocate the discontinuation of pro forma parent-child relationships after adolescence, arguing that it can be destructive to both parties.” As a substitute for the family, they substituted their own weird therapist-patient collective, the Sullivan Institute, later known as the Sullivan Institute/Fourth Wall Community. (The Fourth Wall referred to the fact that the Sullivans – much like the Fred Newman group – established their own theatre company of sorts.)

“NATURE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATATONIC EPISODE”

PN became so interested in “catatonic episodes” that they devote an entire chapter to this issue in their 1963 book under the heading “Nature and Management of the Catatonic Episode.” In it they argue that “growth and catatonic symptoms go hand in hand.” For PN, a catatonic episode is associated with “the breakdown of dissociations.” In such a condition,

the logical structure of the self-system – awareness – is forced to collapse, because its foundations has been abolished. The person returns temporarily to the childhood situation in which the entire smashed wall of prohibition was first constructed. Momentarily, he is dependent on the prohibiting mother for life, survival, sanity, and education as he was at the time when he was learning to think.

Subjectively, the experience is of a break with people, a total isolation, a loss of sanity. There is a massive disruption of both the productive and the defensive functions of the self-system. *(The Conditions of Human Progress [CHP]. 245)*

Under such conditions, “dizziness and nausea are almost direct expressions of a shift in the frame of reference.” *(CHP, 246)*
Yet someone can emerge from such a state “with more potential for life and relatedness and freer access to his true feelings. . . . Thus the constructive management of the acute schizophrenic episode is one of the cornerstones of psychotherapy.” (CHP, 247) It may even be the role of the therapist to force a patient into such a crisis situation:

Anxiety is inherent in analysis. Even major catatonic episodes may not be avoidable if the person is committed to growth. At the point where a catatonic break seems possible, however, even excellent psychotherapists often assume that they should routinely veer away from the topic at hand and re-approach it more gradually. If there is a constructive approach that is more gradual, this would certainly be worth a try. But time is often urgent. Neither analyst nor patient lives forever and, actually, the worst fate for the patient is not the acute schizophrenic episode. That, although more spectacular, is much to be preferred to the person’s insidious deterioration, the progressive restriction of his life, the ultimate expulsion of all interpersonal emotions except those of bitterness and envy. (CHP, 248-49)

In short, PN seem to be saying that forcing a kind of mental crisis in a patient – and using the extreme anxiety it causes – can be a productive force in transforming someone’s personality. This same idea is also expressed repeatedly in BP doctrine.

**SULLIVANIANS AND THE UPPER WEST SIDE**

In 1957 PN founded “The Sullivan Institute for Research in Psychoanalysis” which was located at their brownstone on 77th Street between West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. By the late 1960s, the group had begun to take off. At the center of it all was Saul Newton, an extremely charismatic and highly abusive figure who liked to bait liberal upper middle class intellectuals in particular. One such intellectual, Richard Elman, recalls Newton screaming at creative artists, ‘YOU’RE AL A BUNCH OF DESPERATE FAKERS, LIARS, AND SCAM ARTISTS, AND YOU KNOW IT, WHICH IS WHY WE TALK.”

During this time, “both the leadership and membership of the Sullivan Institute/Fourth Wall community had strong ties to various leftist
organizations and teachings. Saul Newton viewed the theoretical innovations that he and Jane Pearce set forth in their book as adjuncts to his revolutionary politics.” (Siskind, 22) Siskind also writes that the Sullivanians were:

in some respects a combination of both the Old and New Lefts . . . . In addition, PN's involvement with the CPUSA and later with the psychoanalytic community put them in the unusual position of attempting to combine these two different weltanschauungs into one unified project. They embraced the New Left and in the late 1960s and early 1970s were actively attempting to recruit patients and “trainees” who had activist backgrounds or aspirations.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, the Sullivanians attracted a group of intellectuals and artists that included Jackson Pollack and Jules Feiffer. The group also made strong inroads on the student population on the Upper West Side. According to Siskind, one group of Sullivanians came out of the Manhattan School of Music. Columbia University was yet another recruiting ground with the Sullivanians attracting people within certain graduate departments of Columbia University including Columbia’s School of Social Work (where Ed and Nancy Spannaus were studying in the mid-1960s) and Columbia’s Department of Anthropology (where another early NCLC member name Robert Dillon was a graduate student).

A LAROUCHE CONNECTION?

In the early 1960s as LaRouche was allowed by the SWP leadership to give a lecture on Eric Fromm and Marx, PN were formulating their “radical” reworking of Sullivan's ideas based on the work of both Eric Fromm and his former wife. In the introduction to their 1963 book, PN write that

In addition to drawing in a major way on Sullivan's theories, the authors were influenced directly by the particular approach to therapy of Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichman and by certain theoretical formulations of Dr. Erich Fromm. Fromm's emphasis on cultural repression and depression is more explicit than Sullivan's. Fromm-Reichman's consistent relating to the patient’s drive to mental health and the
therapist’s necessity for organizing this drive into a useful dynamic was more explicit than either of her collaborators.

Given LaRouche’s praise of both Fromm and Sullivan, it seems unlikely that he could have been totally unaware of the existence of a group of radical Fromm/Sullivan followers who were also political radicals. In fact, in his quote from the Feuerbach Campaigner, he says as much when mentions “factions directly or indirectly associated with the viewpoint of the late Harry Sullivan.” This could only be the Sullivanians.

In that same quote, LaRouche also gives considerable credence to the Sullivanians’ psychoanalytic “methods” (such as anxiety-producing attack therapy?) when he adds: “However even these more advanced psychoanalysts have been limited both theoretically and practically by their want of a fundamental grounding of psychoanalysis to replace the crippling old Freudian meta-psychology and its parodies.” In short, the Sullivanians were still stuck with an older philosophical worldview which BP would soon replace. We also know from the testimony of his former wife, Carol, that LaRouche did see a therapist in the 1960s. Did he choose a Sullivanian? From the late 1950s till the late 1960s, all Sullivanian therapists had some kind of medical certificate or professional credentials.

A SULLIVANIAN MODEL FOR BP?

LaRouche claimed that his project in BP was to create a new generation of revolutionaries by a radical combination of ideas taken from Marx and Freud. He used the social anxiety produced by Operation Mop-Up as a kind of battering ram to push forward his new ideas under such crisis conditions.

In looking at LaRouche’s writings, it is utterly clear that he incorporated a lot of rhetoric and ideas he had first picked up in Boston in the late 1940s when he began following the debates surrounding the Macy Foundation conferences in cybernetics. However in BP, LaRouche made a central tenant the notion of “mother’s fears” as a critical component of bourgeois ideology. This idea clearly did not come from the Macy Foundation conferences but from the world of certain “left Freuds” like Fromm and then expanded upon by people like Newton and Pearce.
Finally it is worth noting that in the winter of 1972, the NCLC theoretical publication, *The Campaigner*, ran an article attacking Wilhelm Reich written by Nancy Spannaus, one of the early founding members of the NCLC who met LaRouche when she was at the Columbia Graduate School of Social Work. Spannus’s article was very critical of Reich. In itself, it would not be particularly interesting except that the article is premised on the notion that various left sects were using Reich for their own internal political ends. In short, Reich was an example of a kind of radical Freudian model that had a political and organizational side that could be incorporated into sectarian life. In fact, the NCLC-splinter group -- Steve Fraser’s Socialist Labor Committee (SLC) -- even adopted Reich’s ideas in an almost guru-like manner before the sect collapsed sometime in 1971-72.

What no one could know reading Spannaus’ tract was that in just a few months LaRouche would introduce his own “psychological” model to totally reorganize and transform the NCLC. Did LaRouche have some knowledge of the Sullivanians and their theories and did this experience provide both a theoretical and organizational template for LaRouche in 1972-73 when he was planning to radically transform the NCLC? Although it is impossible to be completely sure, there are real reasons for thinking that LaRouche incorporated some of the critical theories and practices of the Sullivanians for his own political purposes in the spring of 1973. If so, LaRouche actually deliberately used the anxiety generated around things like Operation Mop-Up and the later “assassination plots” to break down the old identity of leading NCLC members along lines first outlined by Pearce and Newton as far back as the early 1960s.