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### Publications

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## Internal racism, anxiety and the real world

I begin by exploring the relationship between racism in the mind and events in the world post-September 11 2001. I suggest that pervasive, primitive anxiety in the West, triggered by the bombings on that day, was managed by the deployment of a paranoid organisation, in which the world of Islam is viewed as the enemy – the source of the threat to the survival of western civilisation. Although this construction exists partially in consciousness, it nevertheless seems to hold extraordinary sway, suggesting that powerful unconscious elements are at play. These interfere with ego activities such as judgment, which, in turn, makes ordinary problem solving more difficult. For example, actions at odds with the very values of the civilisation being protected – e.g. the erosion of the rule of law – follow, and voices opposed to such actions are dismissed as at best naïve (“terrorist-sympathisers”) or as the enemy within (“those who are not with us are against us”). I suggest that it is the deployment of racism as part of an internal, organised strategy of defence that lends coherence to this unfolding chain of events, and ask: What is it that gives organisations like this such power over our minds?

I develop the theme of internal racism using two examples drawn from key moments of racist interaction, when organs of the state failed in its duty to protect its black citizens, and into which there have been formal inquiries. One concerns the police reaction in the Stephen Lawrence case, the other the failure on the part of professionals to recognise Victoria Climbié as an abused child. I highlight how ordinary ego functioning was paralysed, and show its link with unconsciously racist thought. I then outline a clinically-based understanding of those mechanisms, emphasising the fact of their being part of a coherent organisation. I conclude that reliance, on the part of those who apply psychoanalytic understandings in the wider world, on a psychoanalytic developmental model that pays insufficient attention to organisations of defence as part of the normal mind, restricts our ability not only to understand such phenomena fully, but also to intervene accordingly.