

## The Social Sinthome

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**Abstract:** Much of the critical discourse on social media misidentifies its problematic features as bugs, or problems to solve. Supposed solutions to these problems tend to focus on individual actions. We should delete the apps, own our own data, never click on recommended videos, and realize that we are the product. But if predatory algorithms succeed by individuating people—selling people “choice” and “options” as it harvests user data—then an entire online ecosystem arranged through the logic of that design can neither be meaningfully challenged nor effectively understood at the level of the individual alone. Transformative action addressing social media can only occur after we understand it at the nexus of where the group impinges on the individual. I revisit one of psychoanalytic theory’s primary gambits, interrogating the effect the social has on the individual psyche, to examine the fact of the social itself as a problem. Working from this premise, this essay has two ambitions: 1. To show that social media is always already a site to see the psyche as understood by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, meaning that social media is space for the psychoanalytic conception of the psyche prior to any intervention on behalf of psychoanalytic theory/ theorists; and 2. To show what we gain by reflecting that argument back on to psychoanalytic theory itself.

**Ryan ENGLE**

## **The Social Sinthome**

### **Introduction**

In a March 2021 interview with *Yahoo Finance*, Walter Isaacson, author of *Steve Jobs: The Exclusive Biography* (among other publications), articulates one of the popular grievances against social media. As Isaacson sees it, algorithms that drive businesses like Google, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter, "push us to be more and more extreme" and "tend to incite people to get enraged and pass along misinformation" (Zahn and Serwer). How to mitigate this, according to Isaacson? Tech giants should take more responsibility for what their algorithms privilege. While Twitter took steps to more actively police election and vaccine misinformation through such initiatives as Birdwatch, a crowdsourcing program that encourages users to add more context to certain tweets (Bond), Facebook took darkly comic steps to further empower its most destructive users (Canales). As Center for Humane Technology founder Tristan Harris told the United States Congress this past April, central to how social media companies sustain their business models is "creat[ing] a society that's addicted, outraged, polarized, performative and disinformed" (DeChiaro). Recently leaked internal Facebook documents shows that Facebook understands their business model at the problematic level that Harris does...it's just that, to them, this is a PR problem that they have no idea how to solve (Wodinsky). On this story, a recent headline from the excellent media watchdog group *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* argued: "Facebook Puts Engagement and Growth Before the Health and Welfare of Democracy" (Jackson). This sentiment is no doubt true, but to reach a more pertinent question we have to invert the clauses: why shouldn't Facebook put engagement and growth before the health and welfare of democracy when democracy puts engagement with and the growth of capitalist enterprise ahead of the health and welfare of democracy? Demanding social media companies adhere more strictly to a code of personal responsibility informed by a nebulous notion of democratic morality is unlikely to change anything material about the way social media operates. What's more it misses that this purportedly dark underbelly to social media is the *raison d'être* of its entire appeal.

The problems of social media are manifest: it's making us angrier, less informed, more isolated and—most alarmingly of all—it represents an existential threat to democracy. Supposed solutions to these problems—offered both in documentaries such as *The Social Dilemma*, and by tech pioneers such as Sir Tim Berners-Lee, and progressive politicians such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—tend to focus on individual actions: We should delete the apps, own our own data, never click on recommended videos, and realize that we are the product.<sup>1</sup> If predatory algorithms succeed by individuating people—selling people "choice" and "options" as it harvests user data—then an entire online ecosystem arranged through the logic of that design can neither be meaningfully challenged nor effectively understood at the level of the individual alone. Transformative action addressing social media can only occur after we understand it at the nexus point of where the group impinges on the individual. To do this work, we will need to revisit one psychoanalytic theory's primary gambits in interrogating the effect the social has on the individual psyche. Psychoanalysis argues that the social is an injunction on the individual. For psychoanalysis the fact of the social itself is a problem. Its analyses of culture do not proceed from discrete problems of the social but rather accepts the social, the instantiation of the social, as itself a burden on the individual psyche. This essay will look to works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan where both psychoanalysts take an extended look at the tension generated by the collision of the psyche and the social, specifically in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Seminar XXIII: The Sinthome*—paying particular attention to the latter seminar of Lacan's—in investigating these claims.

*Sinthome* will serve as this essay's leading idea. *Sinthome* is a concept Lacan invents to quilt together his three registers of real, symbolic, and imaginary.<sup>2</sup> As Slavoj Žižek explains, "*sinthome* is

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<sup>1</sup> Berners-Lee refers to his position as "data sovereignty" (Verdegem), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has voiced support for a "privacy bill of rights" (@AOC), and showing how these individualist positions are supported far and wide, an *Economist* op-ed by Hip-Hop star will.i.am demonstrates how mainstream some of these ideas have already become (will.i.am).

<sup>2</sup> The precise exigence for this idea does not emerge from a lacunae in Lacan's system, as Lacan's three orders are already intrinsically connected by each of the three orders being contained within each other. Slavoj Žižek explains this well when he writes, "the entire triad [Real-Imaginary-Symbolic] is reflected within each of its three elements. There are three modalities of the Real: the 'real Real' (the horrifying Thing, the primordial object, from Irma's

not the symptom, the coded message to be deciphered by interpretation, but the meaningless letter that immediately procures *jouis-sense*, 'enjoyment-in-meaning,' 'enjoy-meant'" (128). In Žižek's reading of the late Lacan, *sinthome* is a "point [that] functions as the ultimate support of the subject's consistency" (129). *Sinthome* is anti-discursive, a radical kernel of enjoyment that is not simply resistant to symbolization but immune to it.

Here we see the two opposed logics with the *sinthome*: a most exceptional symptom and a symptom that, if treated, would destroy the subject. The problem is with the wager of exceptionality that Lacan rests his idea on. That which is most mundane, most regular, is that which cannot be excluded from the subject without tearing the subject apart—not something of an exceptional character. Lacan's misstep, in my reading, occurs at a level directly relevant to discussions of social media: critics are drawn to the exceptional when we need to be drawn to the banal. In fact, we need to trouble the very notion of "social" that we employ. What drives social media is the enlarging of the individual, not the contact with a wider public. Algorithmic siloing is successful at limiting the imagination for social formations. We can name "Academic twitter," "furby TikTok," and "cottagecore," as highly specialized singular containers but cannot imagine "worker TikTok," "plebcore," or "prole twitter." These categories seem so big—seem to encompass so many people and so many experiences—that it's hard to imagine that they exist at all. These groups cannot be sold things or marketed to because, in a meaningful sense, they are all of us.

So, the question before us is two-fold: why do we make this category error? My answer is that we have a fetishistic psychical investment in seeing the individual even when we allege to speak to or for the social. This is where psychoanalysis helps us to understand social media (as phenomenon) as a problem for democracy. However, social media helps us to read back on psychoanalysis and see where the social is given up too cheaply as a concept in favor a turn inward. We can see this play out in Lacan's thinking through of the *sinthome*. Which leads us to the essay's second question: how do we think the individual and social at the same time? My answer is that we need to see that the individual is already social, that there is not a subsequent or secondary socialization that happens to the individual psyche before it is formed.

### Psychoanalysis and the Social Tie

Responding to attempts by his contemporaries to understand the relation between the social and the individual, Freud opens *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* by entertaining the possibility that "the social instinct may not be a primitive one" (5). By this Freud means that people are not born with the intrinsic inclination to operate socially in the same way as, say, herd animals or honeybees. Despite this positioning Freud is not open to the notion that the social is *so alien* to the human psyche that the injunction of a group completely changes the psychical structure of the subject. He begins *Group Psychology* by critiquing Gustave Le Bon's notion of mob mentality and the obliteration of the individual that he argues takes place in the group. For Le Bon, certain groups incite desires and behaviors in an individual that they would have shown no prior inclination toward. Freud pushes back on this assertion, highlighting that for psychoanalysis:

It would be enough to say that in a group the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses. The apparently new characteristics which he then displays are in fact the manifestations of this unconscious in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition. (9)

Freud is underlining that, to even operate in the social sphere at all, a kind of repression has to have taken place. One cannot do *exactly* what one wants all the time in every situation otherwise one will find themselves on the outside of the group. If certain attitudes shift within the group at large, Freud offers, one may find an opening to display behavior and activity that they would have otherwise repressed. For Freud, the key point here is that the social is always already inflected and injunctioned on the individual subject.

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throat to the Alien); the 'symbolic Real' (the real as consistency: the signifier reduced to a senseless formula, like quantum physics formulas which can no longer be translated back into—or related to—the everyday experience of our life-world); and the 'imaginary Real' (the mysterious *je ne sais quoi*, the unfathomable 'something' on account of which the sublime dimension shines through an ordinary object). The Real is thus, in effect, all three dimensions at the same time: the abyssal vortex which ruins every consistent structure; the mathematized consistent structure of reality; the fragile pure appearance" (*For They Know* xii).

It's not likely that Walter Isaacson or Tristan Harris have Freud in mind when they speak about the problems of social media but there is a case to be made that Freud is addressing their concerns about Facebook and Twitter directly when he writes, "Inclined as it itself is to all extremes, a group can only be excited by an excessive stimulus. Anyone who wishes to produce an effect upon it needs no logical adjustment in his arguments; he must paint in the most forcible colors, *he must exaggerate, and he must repeat the same thing again and again*" (14 emphasis mine). As distressingly timeless as these words have turned out to be, what Freud helps us to see is that we have a psychical investment and implication in the social and that this positioning creates friction. This is no small thing. As we saw in the survey of public commentary that began this essay, discourse on the ills of social media tend to reject precisely this positioning and focus on a uni-directional model where powerful tech companies are doing things *to us*. Uninterrogated is the potential for us as subjects of direction to be adopting a psychical position as desiring that which undoes us. As Freud writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of communal life by the human [drive] of aggression and self-destruction" (149 translation modified). This discussion of social media and its problems is directly relevant to the problems of the social and the psyche that Freud saw fomenting in 1930.

### Extimating the Sinthome

My interest is not in answering directly the well-founded and urgent problems of social media and democracy raised in popular media but how to think this tension differently. Our enjoyment of social media derives directly from its socially destructive character. There is no *jouissance* without this cut against the social. The question is how to flip this. How can the psychical hit occur against the cut of the subject and not against the social?

In developing the idea of *sinthome*, Lacan finds inspiration for his inquiry in the fiction of James Joyce. What Lacan, a lover of wordplay, finds in Joyce is someone who uses the English language "in such a way that the English language no longer exists" (3). For Lacan, Joyce's literary invention exists in breakdown of paternal metaphor. Following Joyce's predilection for portmanteau, a number of different overlapping ideas and words act as support for *sinthome*. Lacan looks at the word *symptôme* (the Greek spelling of symptom), a core idea in psychoanalysis being the identification with one's symptom; *saint homme*, meaning Holy Man; Saint Thomas, emphasizing the doubting and unbelieving of the Saint's story; and more minor wordplay such as *sin'thome rule*, as in "home rule," as in Irish Home Rule, the name of the Nationalist movement for Irish self-governance during Joyce's lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

As Paul Verhaeghe and Frédéric Declercq show, Lacan "invites everyone to create their *sinthome* at the place of the lack of the other" (16). This purely individual basis for *sinthome* is a logic I would like to work through. Freud specifies that the social is not inherent in humans as a species and it's precisely for this reason that, especially in the era of global capital, the social is a primary injunction on the individual psyche. I want to move the *sinthome* from something private and personal to something always already social. The private that is already public, public that is already private would seem to better bind the subject to the three orders than a strictly personal phenomenon. To do this work, I want to take us back to how Lacan even begins to articulate this idea in the first place. Following Lacan's interest, I would like to ground my own inquiry in a bit of wordplay and Joycean close reading.

Lacan begins his exploration of *sinthome* "advantageously," as he says, with the word's first three letters, sin. In English, as Lacan tells us, sin comes from "the trespass of original sin" (5). Original sin, a lethal enjoyment of knowledge, is the first suggested concept in *sinthome*. If we turn from English to Spanish, however, something else happens. Far from being an arbitrary displacement of language, we are able to move the *sinthome* from something private and personal to something always already social.

<sup>3</sup> Coincidentally, the Catholic Church plays a not insignificant role in how the phrase "social media" developed. In 1963, the "Decree on the Media of Social Communications" clarified the Church's official position on mass media. Relevant for the present discussion is the following warning: "The principle moral responsibility for the proper use of the media of social communication falls on newsmen, writers, actors, designers, producers, displayers, distributors, operators and sellers, as well as critics and all others who play any part in the production and transmission of mass presentations. It is quite evident what gravely important responsibilities they have in the present day when they are in a position to lead the human race to good or to evil by informing or arousing mankind" (Pope Paul VI).

*Ulysses'* Molly Bloom would be, for Lacan, a clear figure of enjoyment, or *jouis*-sense. Molly's Spanish heritage forms part of husband Leopold Bloom's anxiety about her, specifically her capacity to have extramarital affairs due to her "hot" Spanish blood. All day on June 16<sup>th</sup>, Leopold is convinced his wife is carrying on all manner of (s)in-fidelities while he is out, even though he himself engages in a sinful act with Gerty MacDowell. This is the kind of sin that interests Lacan, but it is not the sin that we will concern ourselves with.

*Sin*, from Spanish, means without, as in "chili sin carne," chili without meat. Indeed, Lacan might have been delighted to think of the allegedly sexually rapacious character in *Ulysses* as a woman who was "without"—despite what her paranoid husband thought—but I will leave that as a hanging chad for this essay. In this reading, *Sin* as "without" is that which comes to us *from* without. If we position this sin as being primary in *sinthome* we see a concept that comes from *without* rather than from within, we start to articulate a concept emerging within a domain that Lacan might have called the extimate—an intimate that is outside the subject.

It's this idea of the extimate that I find crucial to attach to *sinthome*. Articulating her project on rethinking the social tie and the possibility of transformative political action in *The Excessive Subject*, Rothenberg refers to "extimate causality" as "the operation that generates subjects in their social dimension" (10). "In producing the social subject," Rothenberg claims, "extimate causality also leaves a remainder or indeterminacy, so that every subject bears some un-specifiable excess with the social field" (10). Rothenberg's political project helps us to see *sinthome* as signifier of subject's excess. The subject is not in control of their own excess as it is excessively social.

Importantly, the excess of the subject allows the political act. In this way, it's the excess of social media—that which ties us to an ideological project—is what allows us to break free from it. This un-specifiable excess intrinsic to the subjective encounter with the social field as such is crucial to what I am trying to articulate with this idea of a social *sinthome*. *Sinthome*, as Lacan describes it, doesn't tie us to the social but, in my reading, *sinthome* is an *a priori* social concept. Rothenberg helps us to see that excess designates a site of potential radical change. Lacan theorized *sinthome* as a concept of purely subjective excess but the social dimension here is necessary to use the idea as a politically radical notion.

Furthermore, even following Lacan on closely on the idea of *sinthome* representing an un-specifiable personal particular excess pushes us to seeing the collision of the social. As Alenka Zupančič writes in *What IS Sex?*, "our innermost enjoyment can only occur at that 'extimate' place" (29). This notion of *sinthome* as extimate, a private that is already public, a public that is already private binds the subject to the three orders, allowing us to work more clearly with the idea thinking it as a strictly personal enjoyment that, in the end, is not able to be articulated at all. In making this move, we see a Lacanian concept that is vital for understanding contemporary problems with social media. Lacan grappled with the same thing that we need to as it regards social media. Again, I am not making an arbitrary point with this shift. My goal is to alter our understanding of *sinthome* from the intensely personal—an enjoyment so proximate that to name it or treat it would tear the subject apart—to the social. In looking for an idea that would quilt his three orders together, Lacan found a concept within us that is without us. When we talk about social media, its influence, its deficiencies, its potential, we tend to locate things which impede the individual experience of certain apps (i.e., the creepy advertising that seems to listen to our private conversations). In other words, the social of social media is not just taken for granted but eliminated in service of personal particular complaint.

Our social *sinthome*—our shared symptom, the quilting symptom from without—is the privileging of the individual over the social as a means of not seeing our *a priori* psychological indebtedness to the social tie. In 2015, Fredric Jameson writes in "A Global Neuromancer," "I merely want to remind us that cyberspace is a literary invention and does not really exist, however much time we spend on the computer every day" (Jameson). What Jameson is trying to do through this observation is save us from a psychotic relationship to the internet, wherein we take every popular attitude, tweet, Facebook post, and meme as evidence of a new global synecdoche. It's worth questioning exactly *who* is being represented by the belief that social media meaningfully reflects the social at large. According to Twitter's own internal research (last updated June 29, 2021), for example, 63.7 percent of Twitter users are male; 21 percent of U.S. adults use Twitter; the average U.S. monetizable Daily Active Users (or mDAU) were 38 million for Q1 2021; 77 percent of Americans who earn \$75k or more use Twitter; 80 percent of Twitter users are affluent millennials (Omnicores Agency). But, as we know from Freud, knowledge does not cure the symptom.<sup>4</sup> Lacan wagers that the *jouissance* of *sinthome* saves

<sup>4</sup> Freud writes this in "Wild' Psycho-Analysis": "If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psycho-analysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough

the subject from psychosis. It takes a psychotic position to believe that what happens on social media genuinely represents *everybody* or even predominating attitudes that extend beyond social media itself. Adopting a position aligned with the social *sinthome*, as I've been trying to argue, shows how invested we are in self-destructive fictions—and understanding how the individual psyche is sustained by that which would do it damage.

While this disquisition began in the realm of the linguistic, I do not mean for my revision of Lacan's *sinthome* to come off as pertaining strictly to the discursive.<sup>5</sup> The extimate of Lacan means that the social quality of our unconscious betrays any kind of subjective privacy. Just as we see the unconscious in slips of the tongue, we do not see it *only* in slips of the tongue: mishearing and misreading may be even more prevalent ways the unconscious leaks out, obliterating any privacy we may have—even to ourselves. Therefore, the social element of the unconscious combines two Lacanian axioms: the unconscious is structured like a language and the unconscious is *the other's discourse*. The unconscious is not private and then becomes public or social when a slip happens, for example, the slip itself is evidence of the unconscious's relation to this intimate outside. We are subjects of the unconscious in that we are subjected to it. We are private citizens only because we are subjects of the social and subjected to it.

### **In the Algorithm Less Than the Algorithm**

The social that social media inveighs upon the user is an amalgamation of particular interests. The idea that a group could emerge from this foundation to fundamentally or radically alter a social media platform itself is not a structural possibility within those platforms. We do not need a more or better representative social media, as is often the popular prescription, but rather to disinvest from the idea that social media represents a social at all. Overinvesting in social media's capacity to represent "the people" also—almost paradoxically—leads to an undermining of our agency relative to social media. Ed Finn writes in *What Algorithms Want* that "the most powerful corporations in existence today are essentially cultural wrappers for sophisticated algorithms" (20). At tech companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, the algorithm that effectively *is* each company (Google's is called PageRank) is so complicated that no single employee understands the totality of its innerworkings. Engineers can spend entire tenures at each company in a maintenance or development capacity pertaining to just portions of the algorithm—tending to fragments, in other words. An illustrative example of the inevitable consequences and complications of this model of work occurred when Apple rolled out its Apple credit card. Though this has largely been forgotten (or, perhaps, repressed) in contemporary discourse, the scandal involved women applicants with better credit histories than men either being denied a credit line completely or issued much smaller lines of credit than far less qualified men; including, amazingly, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak and his wife (Patnaik). Apple's response was to reassure both the affected and potential applicants that they had no idea why their algorithm was so obviously guilty of gender discrimination. The counterintuitive yet crucial takeaway is to recognize that this is quite likely literally and technically true—if no one person can know how *all of the algorithm works* how could anybody at the company know why the algorithm would behave in the way that it did? This does not let Apple off the hook, as it rather underlines how ideologically entrenched misogyny is that the supposedly objective data processing of an algorithm could reproduce timeworn and harmful stereotypes (i.e. the algorithm clearly reproduces the idea that "women are frivolous and careless with money, as opposed to men who are serious and rational").

What I am keen to emphasize here, however, is the political danger in believing that the algorithm is, as Lacan might say, a "subject supposed to know."<sup>6</sup> What the phrase "there is no subject supposed to know" means is that there is no single person nor authoritative entity that can guarantee the consistency of your subjectivity. Lacan discussed this when talking about the end of analysis, where the analysand must move beyond thinking that the analyst has special or privileged access to the sense of their psyche. Investing in that idea, Lacan argued, instantiates a bulwark between the analysand and the analytic cure such that the analysand never had to confront themselves and the extimacy of their own unconscious. Bringing Lacan's insight on the subject supposed to know to bear on the issue of the algorithm means this: algorithms do not know everything. I won't go so far as to

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to cure him. Such measures, however, have as much influence on the symptoms of nervous illness as a distribution of menu-cards in a time of famine has upon hunger" (225).

<sup>5</sup> Special thanks to a reviewer who helped me to emphasize that among Lacan's contributions to psychoanalysis writ large, arguably the most important insight is that the unconscious is always already social.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Flisfeder's *Algorithmic Desire: Toward a New Structuralist Theory of Social Media* is an excellent resource for more extended thinking on psychoanalytic theory and the algorithm.

say algorithms do not know *anything* but more to the point of the above example, algorithms do not know the things we think they do. We think they have privileged and special access to our desires but they, instead, often replicate obvious harmful societal biases. In other words, the algorithm doesn't know it knows and if it knows anything (such as how ideologically entrenched misogyny is) all it knows is how to reproduce it in an easily identifiable form but not how to comment on it or even hide it to enable its proliferation. A "perfect" Apple credit card algorithm would operate misogynistically but in a way no one could recognize. When we notice *how* an algorithm works, we are not seeing a graphic moment of its repressive and unaccountable reach but, rather, we are seeing it fail. This is the crucial point: the algorithm hasn't failed in the sense that there is a critical systems failure, as in no one is able to apply for an Apple credit card because the algorithm is "broken." Rather, the algorithm worked the way it was intended but it is within the successful working of the algorithm that the failure is evident. If we misread these points of failure as evidence of the growing domination of "the algorithm" and its de-agentializing spread—and there are plenty of examples with some as mundane as immediately noticing ads on Instagram for something you were just talking about to a friend—then we miss the points of break that allow for resistance to foment.

Insisting that a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach to social media highlight and foreground moments of break and failure opens up the possibility of turning what has recently been seen as a deadlock for democracy into the site of transformative political work. The excess of social media is precisely the condition of possibility that would occasion radical change. What the aforementioned popular critics and social media users themselves are looking for is an answer to solve the problems of social media but that is the obverse way to go about addressing the issue. Rather than search for an answer, we need to change the question. Shifting the premise of critique from how to create a more perfect social media to how to interrogate social media as a constitutive problem leads us to consider entirely different questions.

After agreeing to sell Twitter to Elon Musk, creator Jack Dorsey took to the social media platform to say, "Twitter is the closest thing we have to a global consciousness" (@Jack). Setting aside the misplaced confidence in Dorsey's assertion, it has never been more important to think of how Twitter—and social media in general—makes graphic the unconscious. This work must be done carefully and precisely. The first move, as I have tried to articulate, is to theorize the social itself since, as Lacan emphasizes, the unconscious is always already social. We cannot take the social for granted or imagine it strictly in an adjectival sense specifying a relation to a certain kind of media engagement. Seeing Lacan's idea of *sinthome* as already social allows us to grasp how social media is something that is ourselves, though not ourselves, as something that is in us that emerges from without us. What I have tried to do is make concrete how the social and the individual are inseparable, interdependent, and conflictually constitutive of each other. Where Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis is vital in this conversation is that they approach and understand the social *a priori* as a problem, as Hegelian contradiction, as constitutive subjective friction.<sup>7</sup> As Freud puts it in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "It almost seems as if the creation of a great human community would be most successful if no attention had to be paid to the happiness of the individual" (144). And yet, as Freud understands, the individual compels attention be paid to their happiness. The social—particularly the social of social media—is a site *par excellence* from which to interrogate this primary dialectical tension. It is much more appealing psychically to separate the individual subject from the social or to blame the social for dragging down the individual subject. The turn toward the "great human community" Freud mentions requires seeing that the subject is socialized *first* and it is this prior socializing that causes the subject to exist at all.

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<sup>7</sup> Special thanks to another reviewer who suggested expanding the connection between the concept of a social *sinthome* and Hegel's idea that the universal is repressed in order to sate the particular and the individual. It is only due to my own attempt to restrict references to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis (hopefully for cohesion and clarity) that this thread has not been further developed. The connection is so important, however, so must be mentioned here with a suggestion for further reading: *Traumatic Encounters: Holocaust Representation and the Hegelian Subject* by Paul Eisenstein.



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