

Editoriale

Don't you realize the other is inside you? A thought against Terror

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From September 11 on, terror has presented itself as a symptom of a globalized world which hasn't managed to come to terms with the savage and the barbarian: greed, rapacity, exploitation, the division of society in classes, appropriation of wealth, domination. Generally, terrorists express themselves in religious terms. The enemy is seen as a "devil" and the terrorist perceives himself as a "heroic" agent of the divine. The criminal is moved by personal gain, while the terrorist, in the name of a transpersonal collective value – a religion, an ethnic or national identity, a "patriotic" vision, etc.- sacrifices his life to his alleged "god", even if it is an idiosyncratic and perverted god. Purity and ideational way of seeing the other. Members of a group let their individual differences fade away into a narcissistic identification process with one another, where difference and otherness become the impure element. Filth (M. Douglas, 1966) is a factor that has already been defined in a cultural and historic sense as what is found in the wrong place and cannot be allowed, if a model or a symbolic system were to continue to exist. Uncertainty, insecurity, and ambivalence cannot be endured but have to be eliminated as something impure, in order to create a coherent and homogenous universe from a symbolic point of view. This happens especially in Islam. This narcissistic

phantasy of mirroring and purity provokes a huge persecutory aggressiveness towards those who are different and would threaten internal cohesion.

In some of these groups, the "us" which characterizes the belonging to a community is substituted by the "we are" which, almost necessarily implies intolerance and a potential violence towards those who belong to another group. The ideology of the group defines what is good and what is bad: the rules of the group take the place of the individual Super-ego. Many ideologies of these groups of adolescents are incoherent and contradictory and often require their presumed truth to be validated through violence. Aggressiveness and violence can increase when unbearable, weak, despised and desperate parts of the self, emotions and fears, are projected onto an external object. This projection leads to the necessity to exorcise them through an attack on the victims. In this way the jihadist risks losing contact with the internal parts of the self completely, projected because he is ashamed of them: the internal void which results from this process is filled by clichés taken from radical ideologies, be them religious or political.

Violence is associated with a threat to the identity and cohesion of the group, to one's own endogamic clan; violence towards the



unknown rises, towards that which is different from the self, the esogamic unknown which is destructuring for those who are stuck in the schizophrenic position. In the well-known process of projection, the other is used to preserve the sense of self, allowing the avoidance of frustration and regulating negative emotions. The unworthy and humiliated parts of the self can be projected onto others. In the worst case scenario, the individual could desire to free himself from these unwanted parts of the self through violent actions, until he eliminates his enemy, built to be a scape goat.

The violence which humiliates, the rage induced by shame, regression, the idealization of the self through a fusion with the idealized object and the projection of the negative aspects: this is the constellation which causes hatred in the individual and in the group, until it causes a transgenerational transmission of the search for vengeance. Identifying with the process of victimization of a group seems to be a sufficient reason for violence (Pergola, 2011). The necessity of enemies (both internal and external) permeates the life of these groups. In these, the members become unable to give meaning to their experiences, empathy with the other disappears and egocentrism appears within the group. A group like this faces a regression to more primitive ways of functioning, building an identity of the “we are” different from others, searching for another group into which they can deposit their unwanted parts, another group that becomes the enemy; an excellent toilet into which they can evacuate their destructiveness without succumbing to a persecutory guilt. On the contrary, they will be applauded by the rest of the group and deserve a divine reward.

The world becomes a scenario onto which the script of “victim-executioner” can be played out repeatedly, so the affected person

can alternately identify now with one role, now with the other. The group has so developed a lack of thought which can lead to violence towards and destruction of those who have received the projections. The unrecognized suffering cannot be worked through and it is so passed on through the generations, causing a continued repetition compulsion.

There is a demographic bomb of young people without jobs, of humiliated groups, narcissistically wounded and animated by intents of revenge towards what has been done to them, even on a transgenerational level. There is the illusion of healing the group’s wounds by projecting unintegrated parts of the self and object-images onto “qualified containers”. These containers are generally made by the bordering groups, perceived as “bad” and “enemies” through projective identification. This is why societies seem to have the need for both allies and enemies. Captain Ahab, in *Moby Dick*, with his fanatic hatred towards the White Whale, is the paradigm of the modern terrorist, animated by fanatic resentment.

Terrorist actions are more deeply attributable to the need to re-discover the self by losing it, erasing the borders in order to fuse with a greater entity through immersion into an ideology. This need is guided by the underlying needs to preserve the purity of the self from the contaminating impurity attributed to the Other, who becomes the “Enemy”.

Confronted with the rampant terrorist actions in every part of the world, we psychotherapists can only contribute by proposing a special weapon: thought against terror. True thought has no need for someone to think it: it waits for the thinker to acquire meaning through the true thought and in this way he can define and narrate a meaning. Thought allows us to metalize, to integrate negative and even traumatic experiences, allowing an

opening towards reparation and not towards retaliation, allowing us to integrate our Shadow, searching for a new meaning. The shadow contains all of the parts of our self which we have tried to hide or to deny; including those obscure aspects that we perceive as unacceptable by our families, friends, and ourselves.

Yet we have to make a way for the light that shines in the darkness not only to be included into darkness, but light itself has to include darkness (Jung).

Every political situation is expression of a parallel psychic problem in millions of individuals. Understanding the unconscious etiological motivations has the purpose of proposing sustainable solutions and of creating effective policies: this is why for years we have organized our major events in the main locations of politics.

Nonetheless this wouldn't be enough: the conflict which was projected towards the outside needs to return to the individual psyche in order to be healed. Here we understand the sense of the Socratic reprimand: "Let him that would move the world first move himself". If the individual isn't really renovated in spirit society cannot be renovated either, because it consists of the sum of the individuals. So the only possible revolution is the internal revolution, which starts

from knowing oneself. By doing this, we also find the only hope of winning against man's oldest enemy: Vanity, deadly, sterile, and destructive in itself. "Knowing oneself" also and especially means discovering the meaning and the sense of one's own existence, our personal "entelechy", since every neurosis is the suffering of a psyche which hasn't found its proper meaning. A sense can be found again by meeting the Other. I'll close my editorial to June's number of the IJPE inviting everyone towards a journey that will change our point of view – a "con-version" – citing Jung:

«You don't realize that the other is inside you. Instead, you think that he somehow comes from the outside and you believe you can see him in the opinions and actions of your neighbor which repulse you. Being completely blind, that is where you fight him. Those who accept the other's approach, because he is present also inside them, don't fight anymore but look inside themselves and fall silent» (Jung, C. G. *Libro Rosso*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2010, p. 297).

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