

## A Recent Evolution of the “War Neurosis” Concept

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### Editorial

In France, since 1988, and especially since the 1994 Congress of psychiatry in Toulouse, military psychiatrists of Lacanian inspiration have proposed a renewed vision of traumatic neurosis from the war neurosis concept, by exceeding the limits of the Freudian quantitative model. According to the authors of the Congress report, the trauma corresponds to an encounter with the Real [1].

In everyday life, the subject is only in contact with “selected pieces of reality” embellished by his fantasies and illusions, without being confronted with the harsh and threatening “Real”. During a traumatic experience, the subject is brutally confronted with the raw reality. Thus, his “existential dream” turns into a nightmare. The traumatic reality corresponds to what is impossible to represent and to say. It provokes a “hole” in the signifying capacities of the subject, who faces angst now he is overwhelmed by the disaster. Moreover, if pleasure or displeasure is known to the subject, the “enjoyment experienced at the onset of fright” is unknown to him. Suffering pain, horror, even death is completely, dramatically real. Moreover, every traumatism reveals and awakens the first trauma constituting the subject: this “you are” from elsewhere who breaks in and intrudes into him when he arrives in the world (of language) and is already appointed by others, even before he is able to say “I” [1].

French psychoanalyst Patrick Pouyaud summarizes this conception: “In the trauma, the language is not able to express the irruption of the Real. All trauma is not automatically followed by acting out, but an acting out is a response to what causes trauma for the subject: a breaking or storming of the Real. Where the language fails, there is only an act to cross it. Nevertheless, it is difficult to measure what is traumatic for everyone. Only the subject can say something about it, not events nor facts nor theories”.

Guy Briole belongs to these Lacanian psychoanalysts. At a recent conference entitled “The Unchanged Wars”, he declared that every war is fratricidal: there are only civil wars. War deprives of death; it tears the being from its history. War is a clash of bodies, a pitiless fight in which “it is inevitably him or me”: there will be a dead and a survivor. “Extermination is not death, but a tear of time, an exclusion from one own history. It puts the subject in exile of himself”. This exile corresponds to

both disappearance, a shameful absence and a part torn from oneself. The tear is durable: it continues in a “war after the war”, including heavy secrets. After the soldiers are backing home, it is particularly difficult for them to return to an ordinary life. They cannot forget what they lived and cannot be forgiven as well. “The glance is central in any trauma. The shame of the soldier is accentuated by social ambivalence towards the military. The human being is the weakest link in the war” [2].

According to Guy Briole, self-loathing is even stronger for the drone pilot, who kills from a distance. In his ultra-sophisticated machine, he becomes a fighting robot, a hero without affect, without any limit to put a stop to the horror. His evil, cruelty and destructiveness face legal and intimate impunity. Then, it is impossible for him to free himself from his guilt. Torn from human history, these shadow fighters can no longer return from hell.

“The debriefing seeks to dilute their responsibility, to erase it and their memory. Like the veterans of Vietnam or the soldiers of Algeria, they carry the shame and the horror, they try to hide themselves and sometimes commit suicide” [3].

War is detached from the body, which induces psychosomatic disorders for these soldiers. Science and technology have further dehumanized what is already inhuman in nature. The world has become a battleground, out of bounds and out of control, leaving the door open to barbarism. Wars no longer respect international conventions. “The Name-of-the-father does not hold any more. The model becomes that of organized gangs and deregulation. We live in an augmented reality, a virtual surreal, which potentially puts the threat of war all over. From near and far, we are all concerned by these phenomena” [2].

Today, terrorist attacks, massacres in Africa and wars in the Middle East reactivate and renew the confrontation with barbarous mutilations of the body, attacks on its unity and non-respect of the person in death, disfiguring the human being by attacking precisely his integrity.

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