

## Reflections about 'Understanding' Violence and its Effects on Others: Violence and Women

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Violence is ubiquitous. But language always fails somewhere: violence is dumb, even when violence takes the form of verbal abuse.

### Scene-setting, question-raising anecdotes:

I think of:

i) a two year old casually boffing her older brother on the head with the hard object in her hand as she demands the toy he is playing with: she's decided she needs it right this minute. "Mine! Mine!" she says. "She's learnt to assert herself at nursery school," her mother explains. Later the children scuffle because he's now sitting in the chair she was sitting in previously - if she could topple him out, she would. It reminds me very much of how a year or so back he was always trying *to be* his older brother, howling in misery, frustration and rage when he couldn't accomplish what his older brother had already mastered: more, much more than mere jealousy or envy.

All young animals scuffle. Is the almost omnipresent aggressive violent behaviour of childhood part of the rehearsal play activities for adult life? Will we render our children defenceless, naive, too trusting, ready potential victims if we stop such behaviour too soon? Today the threats of immediate physical violence are better dealt with in training them in traditional martial arts self-defense techniques. One who is sure of his or her ability to master threat is less likely to be violent in life. Such martial arts programs, along with their philosophies, have been successful with violent youngsters in prison and young offender institutions, although initially often mis-used for purposes of bullying.

ii) An old Yemenite shepherd scrambled down a hillock and ran more than a hundred metres to brandish a great clout at three peaceful hikers who had ambled past his flock with a small quiet dog on a leash. At the last minute when he was about to smash the thick stick down on one of the women, he had been disarmed and his weapon had been flung far into the bushy river bed region of the *wadi*. They continued on their hike quietly discussing the incident. Later he arrived with the police to the further astonishment of the three. He insisted on laying a charge of attempted murder and allegations of damage done to his flock. The three were taken in for questioning and so they had to lay counter-charges against him for attacking them without provocation. Of course his charges were dismissed, and accordingly, theirs were withdrawn. But next day the shepherd's picture was in a newspaper along with a report of his confabulation about how he and his flock had been attacked by a huge vicious dog and a foreign kick-boxer, and how he had had to be taken to a first aid station for treatment to his wounds. He also managed to get to tell his story over the radio. I am sure by the time he talked to the reporters he had convinced himself of the version he had imagined. His mis-perception of events had led to an actual threat of violent behaviour on his part, and in self-defense on the part of those threatened by him.

iii) Break in a London comprehensive secondary school: an eleven year old girl refuses to fight back because she's decided not to be like her abusive parents. Her advocacy of non-violence incites other children who try to provoke her into a response. The result is she is all but kicked to death by five youngsters whilst fifty more look on and neither call the teacher on duty nor interfere. On being questioned, prior to expulsion from the school, four of the perpetrators readily admitted their guilt; although identified by the four others, the victim, and the onlookers, the fifth strongly denied that he had been present - his self perception was one of innocence. I'm sure he believed his own story. I draw my comparisons with those Nazis who were tried in Nuremberg and pleaded 'not guilty'.

What about the victim, the previously battered little girl in this instance? If there is a trigger point for everyone in an immediate situation of perceived physical danger, what despair about herself led her not to avoid becoming so abused? What horrific past beatings was she permitting herself once more to endure if not to provoke? Part of the problem of verbal recall is the fact that violent episodes are 'repressed' in terms of verbal memory, and later 'remembered' by being repeated (Freud's notion of the 'repetition compulsion'), re-created and re-played in re-enactments which evoke the emotions roused by the original events. Recent sophisticated brain researchers have confirmed what clinicians have long suspected (Van der Kolb, Pynoos. 1994,1995) - speech centres of the brain are not functional during actual traumatization, and therefore memory is speechless.

Ashley Montagu found a non-aggressive tribe in New Guinea, the Senoi: Accordingly he holds that we humans are not naturally violent animals. Like the mother of the toddler first mentioned, Montagu holds that violent behaviour is learned. But I know we each have a trigger point. However gentle, every one of us is potentially capable of behaving in a violent fashion if and when that trigger point is touched. The questions follow: *What trips the violence trigger?* What 'focal range', which level of understanding, is used to perceive danger? What controls, if any, exist or can be used? What steps can we take to raise the violence trigger threshold? How do we identify what the trigger points are, how they interact with genetic, temperament, inner hormonal and the outer environmental contexts?

According to Sylvia Zilberman et al (1995) violence deterrent programs in schools do little. Sylvia suggests this is because they do not take *the deeper psychoanalytic considerations* into account. In his psycho-analytic study of a murderer Arthur Hyatt-Williams postulated a 'murderous enclave' within each and every human. The execution of a murder may actually take place under conditions in which the individual experiences a threat to the central self, often during an episode of confusion of identities, with projection of aspects of the self onto the victim during behavioural 'recall' of an earlier traumatizing scenario which is re-enacted with role-reversal. That is, the original perpetrator of a violent attack on the once victim has become an introjected object in the individual who is now committing murder through having originally identified with his or her own violator. But this is not the only scenario.

### **A clinical illustration**

A young woman has not yet remembered that she had been incestuously violated by her father from a very early age. She comes for treatment because she finds it difficult to handle her firstborn son. She cannot cuddle him or let him near her. She expects and demands various perverted sexual acts from her husband, and finally kicks him in his genitals in a fit of fury when he tries to approach her. She batters her infant and eventually one day finds herself with a knife in her hand ready to kill her infant. At a certain stage during her treatment it becomes clear to her how she has been confusing her infant boy and her husband with her father. Through various body therapies and in almost trance states she begins to remember the repeated episodes of sexual abuse to which she was subjected by her father, (incidentally, a professor), which began when he bathed her as an infant and continued until she rebelled in her mid-teens. My patient also had fantasies of drowning all three of her children and then committing suicide. The recent case in USA of Susan Smith who did drown her two sons is similar. Her step-father admitted to sexually abusing her.

In the instance of the murderer who Hyatt-Williams analyzed and the passive girl victim in the school ground, we are also postulating a mechanism of re-enactment of some earlier event in the violence perpetrated. We know from recent sophisticated metabolic brain studies that during the experience of trauma those areas connected with symbolization, including speech areas, are switched off (Van der Kolb, Pynoos, etc.). As clinicians have long discovered, the memory of traumatic events is replayed emotionally and re-enacted when memory comes, i.e. memory is primarily somatic and emotional. Accordingly, we have to approach the reactivation of memory from the bodily therapies. These reactivate the trauma during which the victim is rendered essentially inarticulate. Combined therapies are necessary. Counter-transference difficulties and evoked counter-transference-based reconstructions become an integral part of the therapy as all who work with childhood victims of incest and other abuse have long well-recognised.

### **Trigger-points for violence**

These are not always necessarily derived from inner sources via behavioural memory repetitions, but also from actual external perceived dangers. I remember when I discovered my own trigger point for violent behaviour. Trembling with my effort not to carry out my virtually reflex intention, I successfully controlled it - that time. With the realization that it was indeed a very great struggle not to maim the individual who was momentarily at my mercy, the man who had so provoked my wrath, who so deserved to be hurt, who was crying out for mercy, I grasped the fact that we are all potentially capable of violence, no less than of having an epileptic seizure - it is merely a matter of the sufficiency of the external precipitating stimulus - or the internal (ideological or 'memory of trauma') one.

By 'ideology' I refer to the importance of the socially legitimizing context of violent behaviour which has an impact on the individual super-ego, including what the individual concerned recognises as 'ideal' self and expected 'good' behaviour. (Milgram 1974; Kelman & Lee Hamilton 1989; Lifton 1986; Lifton & Markhusen 1991; Issroff 1995; Straker et al 1993). To quote Bertrand Russell, "It is the attempt to create empires that produces war crimes, because as the Nazis also reminded us, empires are founded on a self-righteous and deep-rooted belief in racial superiority and God-given mission. Once one believes colonial peoples to be *untermenschen* - "gooks" was the American term (in Vietnam) - one has destroyed the basis of all civilized codes of conduct" (Russell 1968). This applies equally to ideological systems within societies, to Stalinism no less than to say, the Christian Belgians in their destruction of half the population of the Congo during a decade, or the Scourge of the Swastika, or the actions of the Knights of Bushido, of the Order of the Rising Sun (Russell 1952, 1958; Gilbert 1986).

Violence can be ideological. Without belief systems to justify their behaviour I doubt that the actions of fundamentalist Muslim suicidal-murderers, Japanese kamikaze pilots, Crusaders and those who perpetrated the Spanish Inquisition, Nazis, Stalinists, the Red Guard during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the dropping of the atomic bomb etc. would have occurred. Some larger ideological underpinning took over the superegos of the Argentinians who 'disappeared' their compatriots and took children from their murdered mothers' wombs: without such 'moral' justification they and others would not have tortured and exterminated so many other human beings, even without our human readiness to comply with orders, to curry favour or fear displeasure of 'superiors'.

### **Revenge**

This is not something that can be over-looked. I was dismayed at a meeting of the European Federation for Mental Health held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on the topic of Conflict and Mental Health which took place just at the time when peace was declared one-sidedly by the Irish Catholic so-called rebel faction. A Kuwaiti social worker presented a series of horrifying pictures of evidence of Iraqi brutality during the invasion of Kuwait, charred bodies, flayed bodies, and so on. Possibly her report was perceived by some as incendiary - being Israeli and having heard of what the Syrians did to Israeli prisoners of war, I did not particularly note that. But I identified with the degree of trauma which she herself was experiencing and expressing in reporting this appalling material. Then an Irishman, a kind, thoughtful Irish psychiatrist, criticised her for not introducing any reconciliatory material in her presentation. Later he again spoke with her, as did other Irish Christian participants who actually attacked her verbally. There was more than a clash of cultural worlds - the Christian 'turn the other cheek' as contrasted with the Sicilian Mafiosa-like nomadic Bedouin prideful revenge 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' teaching. I think we have to recognise that while people are still acutely suffering from the effects of violence, they are not going to be able to adopt any sort of reconciliatory approach. Traumatized people of necessity withdraw into themselves, and nurse their wounds during their efforts to recover. During this time they are not capable of empathy with others: they are in regressed

and narcissistic states, which are natural. We cannot expect wounded people to get up and be sympathetic with those who have wounded them. We must recognise the need to express feelings and ideas of vengeance - but there is a difference between thinking and doing. There is violence in ideation, potential destructiveness, but it is a natural phase. The actual carrying out of the vengeance plan is another matter.

Much can be learned about human behaviour during *Group Relations Training* exercises (Sofer & Trist 1958), where people collect together to study and become more aware of their own selves and behaviour in the here and now of different sized groups, and of groups in relation to each other. We already know quite a lot about authority and power, and of the danger of misguided charismatic type leadership because of people's needs to idolize and to be obedient and conform to social pressures. We have to grow tolerant sceptics, who can also bear doubt and not be what Yeats called 'right-minded women' in his poem "Prayer for my Daughter." We have to accept paradox, and tolerate confusion and doubt. But some issues are clear cut: *there can be no doubt about the dangers of nuclear warfare or accidents, no doubts about the environmental issues, and no doubts about trying to prevent wars and find peaceful ways of co-existing with each other.*

### **Dangers of obedience**

Research such as Milgram's<sup>i</sup>(1963,1974) and Kelman's & Lee Hamilton's<sup>ii</sup> work on obedience to authority (1989), Asche's on conformity(1951)<sup>iii</sup>, and work on the need to 'mind one's own business' when encountering actual or staged violence,<sup>iv</sup> tell us a great deal about ourselves, aside from the lessons we might choose to learn from history. *As women and educators, we have to speak up for a measure of non-conformity, and aim to grow as people who are independent-minded and can face being disobedient.* This is essential. A good society will have to have all points of view represented and open free debate. *We must hold out for democracy, whatever its imperfections. And that means women's votes world-wide.*

What about *violence on TV*? Exposure to violence on TV does not necessarily lead to more violent behaviour except in those already so predisposed. But we are all affected. And children who are vulnerable are certainly even more adversely affected. I think that there is too much violence on TV because those programs attract viewers. Should we join with those who advocate less exposure? I think we should. However, we have to leave an area for the relatively harmless and vicarious playing out of violent impulses - sports, computer games, TV, books, the games we play with toddlers when we build structures for them to break down with glee, and play-play shoot us: 'Bang, Bang! You're dead!' and then 'Come alive' again on command. These are important games in terms of development, necessary play activities through which the external world is built up as external and reliable (Winnicott 1971).

### ***Culturally encouraged violence***

#### **Certain fundamentalist religious beliefs**

As I write there's been another attack by an Islamic fundamentalist Hamas suicidal-murderer, a human bomb who believed he was blowing himself into Paradise, earning points for random maiming and murder. What was his nurture like that he is so full of hatred for life, probably self-hatred and hatred displaced from his parents no less than of Jews/Israelis? Was it mother or father who abused him most? I wonder about the personal histories of the recent Japanese cult leader and his followers which led them to gas complete strangers on the underground? There are many other examples of cult behaviours which seem to us inexplicable and bizarre.

#### **Girl child genital mutilation**

Surely some unwilling little girl is being clitoradectomised if not getting the infundibulisation mutilation. Twenty years ago I read an article by Hepzibah Menuhin giving the figure then of at least sixty million women who have not enjoyed intercourse, who have had difficult to dangerous births, been mutilated with the unavoidable effect of resultant ambivalent relationships towards their mothers, their spouses and their own children. This in turn affects the degree of violence expressed physically in their societies and their attitude towards life itself.

#### **Examples from around the world**

Gil Eliot's *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead* did not include in his horrifying figures those of the closing decades of this century. Today in Detroit and elsewhere in urban USA one or two children will be shot by other children in school, and one child so shot will die each week. In South Africa at least two murders occur, at least two rapes will be reported per hour, horrendous numbers of children will be sexually and otherwise abused, cars hi-jacked by shooting, people mugged, wives and children beaten - and we are not talking of the random cruelty and violence inflicted by children on other children, by those who have themselves been abused by others, of state organized violence, of drug syndicate violence, of prostitution, of paraphilias (perversions). We are not talking about verbal abuse and verbal violation. To get even a remote idea of the extent of violence, of violation of what has been recognized as a fundamental human right, multiply by many and we still are probably under-

estimating the extent of pain which is this minute being inflicted by perpetrators on victims, and the damage being done to bystanders, especially if they are children.

### **The on-looker and violence**

We will never know whether we will feel worse if we listen to yet more testimony, watch the TV, or if we simply cannot face looking at the pictures of what people like the Nazis did and what others are doing right now. Both ways there is an element of self-torture - but nothing compared with what those skeletal forms who were once no different to us endured.

I remember the lines of Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai: "I believe I believe that it really did happen." Many survivors experience their memories as if they were dreams and still search for those whose killing they have personally witnessed. Knowing it all really did happen, it is still difficult to accept, difficult to believe that it really did happen and happen as it did. Nobel prize-winning survivor, Eli Wiesel has been interviewed: "I have read every word, seen everything. . .," he says, "and I don't understand. . . . I will never understand." The *world news reports* are numbing, adding now the dimension of by-stander guilt to the overdose of helplessness and horror which cannot be escaped when seeing the pictures of the latest all too human atrocities.

Because I object to a pretense that it is not happening and cannot ignore it, because I am now in the position of being a useless, helpless, paralyzed bystander, because I do not really know what we can do, certainly nothing effective to help them, but at least that we should not forget them, I think it would be appropriate if we devote a minute of silence to the Muslim Bosnian women in particular right now. And also remember those of Rwanda and Burundi and Liberia, those who survived in Angola, and the Renamo and Frelimo savagery in Mozambique, those in Burma and many in Tibet and China and Chechnia and the Amazonian jungle tribes in Brazil and other parts of South America, and far too many, many other places.

We are all too familiar with the constant litany of evidence of mankind's propensity for violence. I am tempted to quote Picasso when he was asked about the meaning of an abstract painting: "Do you understand the song of a bird?" he asked. "No! You just enjoy it!" Do human beings understand violence? No - but maybe some human beings enjoy it! After all, violence is ubiquitous, as human as is loving, breathing. Is it an inescapable part of being amongst the living? Does violence inevitably beget violence? What makes some of us more Rumpelstiltskinian<sup>v</sup>, anger, rage, and violence-prone than others? Our genetic and temperamental makeup? Or hormonal influences in the womb and their effects on our brain structure together with current levels and ratios of various hormones? (Since being spayed my gentle bitch has become far more aggressive, possessive, jealous, territorially defensive, noisy.) We know that violence is not merely a matter of poverty or social conditions - there's just as much incest and wife abuse amongst the affluent as elsewhere. Although those who were victims of violence themselves in childhood tend to become perpetrators of violence, including on their own children as in the cases mentioned, but this is not necessarily so, not always - and in that clause lies some hope.

Murray Strauss has studied physical abuse and violence extensively. His book *On Beating the Hell Out of Them* is a compendium of careful statistical studies. His evidence is overwhelming and the findings most worrying. Almost all toddlers in the USA are beaten. Violence begets violence. The conclusion cannot be ignored. We must try to put an end at least to physical violence against children, whatever the cultural norms may be. The data show that children who witness violence against others are no less affected than those who are victims: watching mother beaten up by

father or vice versa, or a sibling thrashed, is simply a recipe for the continuation of such behavioural patterns within society and across generations. EPOCH world-wide is an organization devoted to Ending Physical Punishment of Children. We must support and encourage them in their efforts. What Murray Strauss said recently in Israel was that *women hit men no less often than men beat up women in the USA*, but because when a woman hits a man the effect is not necessarily as damaging physically as when a man hits a woman, and because it is currently politically unsound to report the real figures, the number of attacks by women on men and on children has been mis-reported. Now I do not think feminism is against the truth - I hope the movement is not going to deteriorate into a kind of cult in which what does not suit the current beliefs is denied, or the ends aimed for are mis-used to justify all means. If we want less violence, *we have to demand that the truth be told and not withheld. We need groups for spouse and child abusive women to attempt to deal with their violent propensities no less than groups for abusive men.*

We know that in *overcrowded conditions* rats become more aggressive. We know what happens in our overcrowded urban areas. We know that the most violent individuals in a prison population require more space around them than less aggressive prisoners.

### ***Traumatized populations and violence***

In the natural laboratory of Northern Ireland Rhona Fields examined the ideational contexts and impact of violence on continuously cumulatively traumatized populations. This is a population that lives in a culture of violence and with belief systems which perpetuate the ongoing nature of the conflict over generations. A similar situation exists in ex-Yugoslavia.

*Buddhists* are non-violent to an extreme degree. In continuing to justify this striving in the face of his persecuted people's restlessness and increasing feelings of need to avenge themselves on and defend themselves against the Chinese, the Dalai Lama has said that the atrocities perpetrated by the Chinese give the Tibetan Buddhists the opportunity to achieve compassion: he held that empathy is the highest form of spiritual development, the greatest challenge - and in order for that to be achieved one needs an enemy.

In the *Jewish traditional sources* the debate about when violence is permissible has continued for more than a couple of thousand years. This is not the place to enter into the rich complexity of the discussion found there. Essentially it is life, respect for life and for others which is celebrated in Judaism. Killing is condoned, indeed commanded only in self-defense when actual life is threatened. However, it was commanded according to the Bible, in terms of the conquest of the promised land of Canaan, but only in relation to the tribes of Canaan at that Biblical time of conquest. Violence is condemned in Judaism and there is a tractate which excludes a man who has raised his hand in violence against another from being admitted as a witness in court.

The eye-for-eye, tooth for tooth *revenge factor* which was practised widely in many societies, as today, in Biblical times and in nomadic tribes, was acknowledged, but a solution was found in the establishment of the Levite cities of refuge for those inadvertent murderers who had committed manslaughter. Pious Jews know "not to take revenge, but to try to convert" (those who have wronged one) "into friends. For *one enemy, however insignificant, is too much to bear for us Jews.*" (Tosvos Yom Tov, quoted by Lipschitz, Rosenstein 1985).

### ***The death penalty, recidivism, victims and their families and pardons***

Killing people who have killed people to deter others from killing simply does not work! However, we must not forget that certain kinds of killers when released into society kill again. And rapists rape again. A study of imprisoned rapists and pederasts in the USA discovered that many admitted they had violated more than 400 victims before being caught. They also admitted to a succession of offences starting with exhibitionism. The 'flasher' and the 'peeping Tom' are not mild and are not to be regarded as undangerous - they are potential rapists. The 'liberal' legalists and those who would keep down society's costs in maintaining those in prison must recognize the high rates of recidivism, and the need for prevention no less than the necessity to pay more attention to the victims of violence and their families. Global pardons may be necessary as part of reconciliation, as in the Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa or Argentina or Chile, but from the point of view of the victims and their families, as well as the message to all the many unpunished perpetrators in this world, pardon alone is a problematic issue which needs to be addressed.

People adjust to enacting violence, thinking violence: but they are traumatized. Charles Figley (1985) and many others have detailed the effects of participating in the violence of war in combat-traumatized Vietnamese war veterans: violence leads to post traumatic stress states, in which the very term recognizes that it is normal and expectable that the sympathetic nervous system become overwhelmed and over-reactive, unable to maintain its ordinary regulatory functions. The human so afflicted is prone to anxiety states and nightmares following exposure to violence. It may be a 'normative' definition, but post traumatic stress states are disorders. Violence violates and damages.

*The opposite of violence* is harmony, peace, dreams and verbalization rather than action - though words, too, can wound and can lead to violence. This is not the place for a 'the pen is mightier than the sword' debate, but violence can be verbal.

For a year I analyzed a woman who had been humiliated, coldly rejected and abused verbally throughout her childhood and adolescence, and endured the counter-transference reactions she provoked in all their ambivalence. She had never experienced any adequate nurture or love during her own infancy. In a comfortable upper middle class professional milieu she found herself rejecting and actually uncontrollably and cruelly abusing her own infant when the baby cried. Possibly this had happened to her and she was re-enacting what she could not consciously remember, certainly she could not tolerate the infant's needs which set her own regressive unmet infantile needs themselves a-crying out for care.

### **The death drive**

It is no accident that psychoanalysis, a talking/reflecting activity par excellence, one which maintains and enhances empathic capacities, a deeply humane, physically extremely passive and accepting of others *modus operandi* for attempting to understand human nature, was developed by Freud as an alternative to violence in Europe. It is difficult to argue against what Freud postulated as the death drive in the face of the current actual evidence of mankind's unbelievable destructive use of his highest intellectual faculties - but it exists so we had better believe it. For intelligence has developed death-dealing nuclear weaponry to the point of a highly probable omnicide-dealing build up of nuclear weapon 'overkill' potential. And along with that violence-death-MAD ['mutually assured destruction'] technological and bureaucratic deployment of resources direction, man has developed an ideology to justify the madness. In their analysis of 'the genocidal mentality,' Lifton and Markhusen (1991) have clearly demonstrated that all the strategists' thinking employs the same kind of mechanisms as those employed by Nazi Doctors (Lifton 1986) and other intellectuals

along with those followers of lesser intelligence who were active within the Nazi domain. All Robert J. Lifton's studies are of the greatest importance, and deserve our most serious attention. Currently we all are victims of the pinnacle of mankind's development, the nuclear threat.

Those so-called 'thoughtful' leaders who will 'defend' their 'good' against all perceived 'evil' at all costs, have developed their realistically unusable 'deterrent strategies' to the MAD point: along with subjecting themselves and their own kin to what amounts to a mere technological control, the intricacies of which almost no one fully comprehends, all these leaders demonstrably suffer from the dissociative personality splits, doubling of personality, 'group think' (Janis) euphoria and conformist pressures, closed system 'ideological' self-justifying arguments (Bar On), 'hardening', lack of awareness or empathy with the actual human condition, and idolization of their technologies. How can we help them and ourselves to wake from our ostrich-like defensive posturing? Many animals freeze when in danger. We have to lobby for nuclear disarmament as did a group of gifted Canadian children with the support of their parents (the main leader's mother had been a child in a Nazi death camp). It is conceivable that their actions have helped to bring about the small degree of disarmament which has begun. But the situation is too urgent to be ignored.

### ***How can violence be contained?***

In our dream life, and in our imaginary life, that is in our private inner worlds, we are omnipotent, and we can be socially harmless. We do not need to say or do what we think. In other words, we can contain violence safely in inner world symbolization; in language, cognition, thinking, planning, imagining, fantasizing, and in dreaming when symbolism is supersaturated with meaning, motility in abeyance, and socially unacceptable behaviour and expression of impulses safely contained. We do also have cultural containers in our external shared reality as Margaret Mead pointed out (1941), arenas where we may safely express our feelings in dramatic ways, as we can in healthy play during childhood and later in drama, film, religious or other culturally-sanctioned rites (Palgi, Issroff 1983).

The Senoi in New Guinea are dream tellers. The Yemenite Jewish women used to pound out their frustrations, their angers, hopes, fears when pounding their wheat while their men folk were at prayer. Let us tell each other our dreams, expose our innermost selves. Hahn (1995) has reported on the way in which this exercise bonded people who were strangers in a group, and has described the atmosphere which the dream-telling itself engendered, simple narration without associations or interpretations.

### ***Personal integration, splitting and violent behaviour***

Finally I want to mention a theory of D.W. Winnicott. In 1963, whilst reviewing Jung's autobiography, Winnicott dreamt a dream<sup>vi</sup> (1989) which he described in three parts:

1. There was absolute destruction, and Winnicott was part of the world and of all people, and therefore he was being destroyed. (For him 'the important thing in the early stages was the way in which in the dream the pure destruction got free from all the mollifications, such as object relating, cruelty, sensuality, sado-masochism, etc.')
2. Then there was absolute destruction, and he was the destructive agent. Winnicott perceived this as a problem for the ego, how to integrate these two aspects of destruction?

3. Part 3 now appeared and in the dream he awakened. As he awakened he knew he had dreamt that he was both part of the totality that was being destroyed and the destructive agent of this absolute destruction. He decided that he had solved the problem of how to integrate the two aspects of destruction by using the difference between the waking and the sleeping states. Because here he was awake, in the dream, and he knew he had dreamed of being destroyed and of being the destroying agent. There was no dissociation, so his three 'I's were altogether in touch with each other he remembered dreaming the first and second parts. Although the dream work done had made tremendous demands on him, he felt it to be immensely satisfactory. As he began to wake up, he worked on his splitting headache and realized he had these three essential selves, I [3] could remember dreaming the I [2] and I [1]. Had he not awakened and become aware of having dreamt, and had he not dreamt and realized in the dream that he was dreaming - a point which he remembered on waking, Winnicott concluded that he would have remained split. Then he would have resorted to solving the problem of integration of his selves in lived behaviour as so many individuals do, alternately in sadism and in masochism, using object-relating, that is in-lived out relationships to objectively perceived objects, other people.

Winnicott had an acute awareness in the third part of the dream that destructiveness belongs to relating to objects that are outside the subjective world or the area of omnipotence (essentially the world of imagination and of dreaming). Winnicott's new enlightenment from this dream, was, in other words, first there is the creativeness that belongs to being alive, and the world is only a subjective world. Then there is the objectively perceived world and absolute destruction of it and all its details. This realization led Winnicott to profound ideas about the nature of the way in which developmentally we build up a picture of external reality, and how we come to differentiate between inner and outer worlds. He did not live to expound on these ideas, but I am certain they are fertile ground for us to dig in our attempts to understand many aspects of human behaviour, including our propensities to violence.

The starting point for Winnicott's theorizing and sophisticated ego-wise way of dealing with destructiveness was a question that much preoccupied him, namely, how does the world become perceived as external and real and objectively there? In a footnote to an unfinished book, which he wrote as a dissection of human nature over many, many years, he wrote that he had not been able to finish this book until he realized the answer to this question. He drew a diagram of a circle within a circle to signify a human being. The inner circle comprises the area of the experience of omnipotence, the inner world of imagination and of dream in which no actual destruction occurs. In the gap between the two circles he placed the Reality Principle. Then he added a line from outside both the circles and wrote, "This line is between operating in the area of omnipotence, and outside it. If it's a simple journey over the line then the line is the place for destruction 100 percent."

Winnicott was stressing the difference between fantasy and action. Actual violence is always behaved physical action, even if it is verbal. Failure to contain destructiveness in the dream world is thus to my mind a failure of the establishment of the kind of inner world container that we have in health in our capacity to dream. In Winnicott's developmental view: "In health the infant is helped by being given by ordinary good enough devoted mothers areas of experience of omnipotence while experimenting with excursions over the line into the wasteland of destroyed reality. The wasteland

turns out to have features in its own right, or survival value, and surprisingly the individual child finds total destruction (according to his subjective omnipotence) does not mean total destruction."

So we are back to the importance of 'good enough' mothering as fundamental to preventing violent behaviour, increasing levels of frustration tolerance, and tolerance of and curiosity about difference, lessening the perceptions of threat from the outside world, enabling trust, self-confidence, of creating conditions for personal integration, in short of laying the foundations for any peace, anywhere.

The function of mothers, and of caretakers of children, is to provide a sufficiently sensitive protective shield during infancy when developing human beings are most vulnerable to having their ongoing sense of being disrupted (Winnicott 1987; Palgi, Issroff 1983). The rupture can occur either from inner arousal which can reach a level which the infant cannot yet manage without caretaker comfort, or from external intrusions on their inner states which over-excite them and affect their well-being. As a professional who is concerned with the overall integrated development of human beings, of infants and of children within their nurturing environments, I cannot over-emphasize how important the earliest stages of life are, how important the long committed process of mothering and of nurture is for development.

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- ii Milgram, S. found that 80% of people will obey the authority figure of a researcher and go on pushing a button which is apparently, and according to the researcher, delivering an electric shock which is obviously hurting the person being experimented on, (in fact, unbeknown to the button pusher, an actor). This goes on until an obviously lethal voltage dose is given, even if the person pushing the button is sweating and anxious about doing so!
  - ii Herbert C. Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton(1989) discussed many crimes of obedience, the duty to obey and the duty to disobey. They constructed a social-psychological framework for analysing the structure and dynamics of authority and for assigning responsibility in authority situations. Their analysis highlights the obstacles to challenging authority and the conditions under which these can be overcome. Rules, roles and values lead to different views of a citizen's responsibility in the face of questionable policies or destructive orders. They suggest ways which citizens can be encouraged to resist authority when orders violate fundamental moral principles.
  - iii In his classic work with University students, when unbeknown to the person who was being studied, the rest of the class agreed to pretend that a line was the same as the others when it was obviously shorter or longer, Asche found the subject eventually succumbed to group pressure and conformed, denying his or her own accurate perceptions.
  - iv Amongst other examples, students of theology hurried by a staged rape on campus instead of intervening. New Yorkers leaned out of their windows and watched, whilst someone was murdered.
  - v Rumpelstiltskin was a little man in a story who threw a huge temper tantrum when his name was guessed.
  - vi "which was not a nightmare because it never threatened Winnicott's ego's capacity to stand strain" (1989, 228-230).
  - vii Milgram, S. found that 80% of people will obey the authority figure of a researcher and go on pushing a button which is apparently, and according to the researcher, delivering an electric shock which is obviously hurting the person being experimented on, (in fact, unbeknown to the button pusher, an actor). This goes on until an obviously lethal voltage dose is given, even if the person pushing the button is sweating and anxious about doing so!
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