

Different Kinds of Transgenerational Trauma: Healing Old “Psychic Wounds” through Psychotherapy

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Abstract

This article looks at an overview of the concept of ‘transgenerational trauma’ – a phenomenon whereby the trauma that has occurred in one generation is ‘transmitted’ to another generation, and even another beyond that. This phenomenon occurs on a psychic level (often described as a ‘*complex post-traumatic stress disorder*’ mechanisms; or a ‘*secondary traumatisation*’), as the second, third, and later generations have not – themselves – been actually traumatised. Enslavement, slavery, civil and domestic violence, sexual abuse, racial inequalities, and extreme poverty are also sources of trauma, that can be transferred to subsequent generations. The article posits an additional, possibly necessary, transpersonal approach, as well as a theory of human evolution containing transgenerational traumatisation.

Key Words: transgenerational trauma, psychic wounds

Introduction

There are many different forms of trauma – and the particular form “transgenerational trauma” (TGT) that we are interested in – has one significant difference to most of the other forms of trauma: the present ‘victim’ or ‘sufferer’ of TGT is not the person who was originally traumatized.

Trauma is often assumed to be limited to just the individual.^[1] However, where the trauma was more historic and more widespread, it was often communally-based and the previously ‘traumatised’ generation (which wasn’t able to deal properly with the trauma) often – consciously (as in the case of tribal feuds) or unconsciously – passes the effects of their traumatisation down to the next generation(s). The ‘affects’ or the symptoms of transgenerational trauma can often seem very similar to those suffered by traumatised individuals, (i.e. commonly and communally experienced as: addictions to alcohol and other substances; violence in the family; alienation from the community; systemic unemployment; a loss of individual (and communal) identity; involvement in crime; and a systematic degradation (often) of language, spirituality, family structures, social values, etc.). So, there are some similarities and yet also some significant differences between the traumatised individual, per se, and individuals within a ‘community’ suffering from TGT.

One of the most common situations that perpetuates TGT is endemic poverty. Without a proper start in life, it is much harder to get properly educated, or to take a major step out of the slum (as in the ghettos (‘favelas’) and the mega-slums around many South American and African

cities (especially like Ciudad Bolívar, or Kibera [Nairobi] today), or to obtain the necessary resources to overcome (or ‘break through’) from an “underclass” into the mainstreams of society.

We can also find clear evidence of TGT amongst ‘native’ peoples from many different areas: for example, in several Native American or “First Peoples” [Canadian] “reservations”, who have experienced a form of slow (250-year long) genocide at the hands of the “white man”; as well as in the many current ‘permanent’ Palestinian refugee camps (in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza) for those families and generations dispossessed from their traditional lands by the Arab-Israeli wars or the Syrian “Arab Spring” uprisings; or we can see similarities in Armenian communities that still hold survivors of the unacknowledged Turkish ‘genocide’ in 1915; or similarly from ‘communities’ that suffered the Russian ‘pogroms’ of the Jews in the previous century; to say nothing of the survivors of the WW2 Holocaust. All these ‘survivors’ are capable of passing down the trauma of their lives onto the next generation. They tell their descendants what their heritage is (or should have been) and this profoundly affects the next generation: it then becomes part of their “heritage”.

We can also find evidence of TGT in many places: in the survivors of Mao’s Cultural Revolution (that people in China still never speak about); in the survivors (and their descendents) of appalling social policies (like the Australian Aboriginal Half-Cast Act, or the South African ‘Apartheid’ system); in the abandonment of Amer-Asians (half-Asian children fathered by US servicemen during the Vietnam war); as well as in the rigid cast and sexist class system in India; in racial discrimination in many countries (in Britain v. Irish, Jamaicans, and now Muslims); in the (effective) oppression of other Chinese majorities by the Han Chinese; and throughout the numerous tribal ‘differences’ in many African countries; to say nothing of the South American ‘caste’ system (differentiating ‘natives’ as *mestizo/mestiço* from the lighter-skinned pan-European ‘immigrants’); – the list almost seems endless. Nearly every society has a ‘shadow’ side – an “Other”, which differentiates one culture in that society from another. There is often a north/south divide, or an east/west divide, or a sectarian divide (like Sunni/Shia, or Catholic/Protestant), or a racial divide (like Tutsi/Hutu in Rwanda, or Black/White/Hispanic in the USA), or a mixture of both (like the Palestinian/Hebrew tension in the Middle East).

There are also a considerable number of views – from many expert social psychologists and psychotherapists – that recent generations, mostly in Europe, have been suffering from the TGT created by the two devastating 20th-century World Wars, plus – various smaller ones as well (e.g. like the 1956 Hungarian uprising and Soviet invasion, and the post-Tito, split-up of the Balkan states) – as well as all the people who have experienced something of the 250 +/- other wars and conflicts in the 20th century (plus their attendant 78 million deaths) [2] – to say nothing of

the attendant casualties and emotional distress of such wars and conflicts that we often tend (conveniently) to forget about.

We almost inevitably will see something similar and equally tragic and potentially disastrous in future generations: those who are growing up in the horrific environments of the Middle East ^[3]; as well as all the other conflicts (and famines) in various African states ^[4], in post-1945 Europe; and in the Far-East (the Chinese ‘Revolution’, the Korean war, the conflicts in Manchuria, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, etc.); and so on, and so on, almost *ad infinitum*. Indeed, those who might **not** have been traumatised, particularly in these conflicted regions, can now seem very few and far between. Doris Lessing in her visionary novel, *Shikasta*, explores the aftermath of this sort of globally disruptive dynamic.

And here are a couple of personal examples: my first direct experience of TGT was when I started working as a counsellor and psychotherapist in the NHS in the Central Belt of Scotland in 2003. I soon realised that it was somewhat like working in (say) the ‘Land of Mordor’ twenty years after the fall of the ‘Dark Tower’ (viz: Tolkien, 1955): the land itself might once again have become green, but the people – even if none of them had actually been down in a coal mine – were still devastated from the centuries of industrial poverty, and then the almost universal closure of the coal mines, mainly between 1984-1994 ^[5]. There was still clear and present evidence in the present population of the effects of generations of alcoholism, violence and brutality, sectarianism, etc. – as well as now poverty, generic unemployment and ‘make-work’ projects, a lack of community identity, and the reduction of local amenities, etc.

I also remember clearly – as a young teenager – the universal fear of total destruction generated by the 1963 ‘Cuban Missile Crisis’, which debacle culminated in a “stand-off” situation that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. As I write (in July 2015), President Obama and Fidel Castro’s brother, Raúl, are only just now beginning to restore diplomatic relationships (i.e. to try to “heal” this wound?). ^[6] There is a recent film, with Benedict Cumberbatch, *The Courier*, that brought some of that era of trauma back. So, was this – just – a clash in the ‘power games’ between two new 20th century ‘super-states’ (led by Kennedy and Khrushchev); or does the insanity go even further back – possibly to the 19th century Russian pogroms (mentioned earlier), that caused hundreds of thousands to flee to a new life in a “New World”; or do the transgenerational traumas go still further back to (pre-medieval / post-Roman European) fears of death and destruction from invading Mongol hordes?

It took me another 10-15 years to recognise that I was also experiencing – at that time - a different form of (transgenerational) trauma, ‘imposed by the traditional (English “public school”), residential (usually single-sex) boarding school system, that ‘promotes’ a very denigrating, oppressive and abusive homophobic culture, on top of a situation of emotional abandonment and

(often) peer-alienation. The results of such a ‘privileged’ system often promote a somewhat ‘cold’, unemotional persona; eating disorders (more in women); snobbery and ‘classism’; masochism and sadism (in men); homosexuality (in both sexes); potentials for excessive masturbation, pornography, promiscuity and paedophilia (in men), etc. ^[7]

But we are not just seeing these sorts of effects from dysfunctional socio-political events, nor from the fears arising from past historical situations that have been passed down culturally. We are also, very interestingly, beginning to find evidence – physiological ‘evidence’ – through recent advances in neuroscience: we can now ‘see’ how such issues can actually be transmitted epigenetically (probably through processes like DNA methylation) ^[8]. There are also significant differences in brain structures of traumatised persons, such as in the amygdala (see: van der Kolk, 2006).

It is slightly more difficult to define “psychic” wounds, but there is a distinct body of literature and considerable clinical experience that supports the existence of such “psychic” or “soul” wounds. ^[9] People react with grief when ‘psychically’ wounded – bereaved, abandoned, betrayed, etc; there is often a sense of loss and an inability to (re)gain a sense of self when traumatised; the body and the mind are often addressed – and sometimes even healed – after traumatic events, but the (less tangible and often unrecognised) ‘psyche’ or ‘soul’ is usually left without healing, and it is also the *lack* of this sort of recognition and psychic healing that can lead to transgenerational trauma.

C.G. Jung theorized that if an issue, a “complex”, does not get resolved, then it creates a life of its own within the person’s unconscious (Duran, 2010). This unconscious conflict will then result in (often negative) symptoms, as the unconscious mind tries to get the healing that it needs, however – as this is unconscious – it is often doomed to fail. The ‘wound’ (or trauma) is therefore often – not healed – but (instead) repeated. Patrick Casement (1990) writes about this excellently in his chapter on “Unconscious Hope”.

However, there are further ramifications that are also relevant for transgenerational trauma. If the trauma (soul wound) – that a person, group or community, etc. has experienced – has not been healed and does not heal, it starts to fester. Since the victim feels powerless, one way to gain power is to become aggressive: so, unhealed trauma can predispose its victims to become aggressors, and thus many of the ‘victims’ can eventually become ‘perpetrators’: this is sometimes called the “vampire syndrome”. Where the victim is isolated, their only chance for any sort of life is to ‘join with’ the aggressor, and the victim either falls in love with the aggressor or joins the ‘gang’: this is called the “Stockholm syndrome”. But this is all on an individual level. On a community level, similar dynamics between victims and aggressors are often “acted out” in age-old ‘wounds’ that do not heal easily, or that break out again, given the slightest provocation.

The pre-WWI ‘Balkan Crisis’ – caused predominantly by hundreds of years of Turkish (Muslim) domination – that then provoked the First World War and was later attempted to be ‘healed’ by the 1918, & 1946 creations of the country of ‘Yugoslavia’, that fell apart rapidly after Tito’s death and, in 1991, many ‘old scores’ rose to the surface again in the anti-Muslim attitudes and ‘ethnic cleansing’ that happened particularly in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

On a lesser social or community level, the transgenerational traumatized individuals might join a ‘gang’, or join in aggressive or even self-destructive behaviour, or can easily become radicalised. The trauma – experienced (individually and collectively) as a form of oppression – becomes internalized within the community and then becomes ‘acted out’ as violence, either towards other members of the community, the perceived aggressors, or towards a less defended minority, or towards outsiders. The traumatised person can therefore easily become the terrorist: the ‘target’ is the ‘perceived’ oppressor, but the violence comes from what has already happened to and within the person.

Incidentally, choosing just one example, the high levels of Israeli “settler” violence might indicate that both ‘sides’ are suffering from transgenerational trauma: Israelis traumatised by the transgenerational effects of (first) the Diaspora and then again by the Holocaust; Palestinians, by the effects of the oppression of the pre-WWI Turkish Empire, then – more recently – the Arab-Israeli wars, the kibbutz movement, and the more recent “settler” policies that have resulted in a one-sided “land grab”.

The effects or the symptoms of transgenerational trauma can be seen – on an individual level – as addictive behaviours, promiscuity, in examples of family or domestic violence, depression and /or suicidal ideation, narcissistic attitudes, loss of a sense of self, and also chronic physical problems (such as diabetes or hypertension): as these can also be interpreted as forms of violence towards one’s self.

But, on a communal level, similar traits can also manifest themselves as: involvement in crime, the drug trade or prostitution; destructive and/or anti-social behaviour; hooliganism and communal violence; and even potentially radicalisation and/or terrorism. There is therefore absolutely no way that “psychotherapy” itself can address much of these wider issues, given the present ‘structures’ (and limitations) of individual and group therapy.

Certain individuals can make astonishing contributions to help traumatised communities (like the work of Eric Liddell in a Japanese concentration camps, before he died suddenly from a brain tumour): but such people are very rare and are more often than not, missionaries, relief workers, enlightened administrators, etc. – or possibly even avatars or saints. Furthermore, the problems of an individual working on such a communal level can often lead to complete burn-out.

Doris Lessing (1979) also writes very well of this type of healing work in the first of her ‘science-fiction’ series, *Shikasta*.

Psychotherapeutic or healing-oriented interventions must therefore start to address all of these issues, on both an individual level, but also – more importantly – collectively, if it is wished to try to heal some of the issues around and causes of transgenerational trauma. It is not just a matter of: - healing the individual victims’ bodies and minds; - restoring their sense of self and self-esteem; - helping them to improve their behaviours, education, opportunities and their perspectives; - understanding their ‘wounds’ and the damage caused by such, etc.; but it is also a matter of addressing – pragmatically, practically and persistently – some of the wider issues of such “soul wounds”, as well as the wounds of the “group soul” – otherwise these transgenerational traumas can, and possibly will, get passed on – carried down – transmitted – to the next generation(s), almost *ad infinitum*. However, many of us saw – in the US TV series *Roots*, based on Alex Haley’s (1976) novel – in this process, a degree of individual healing is possible, and this lessens the flow of the pain of the collective, possibly many-fold, but definitely not completely.

Interventions on the transgenerational trauma level must therefore – apart from psychotherapist-individual-client-group interactions – also include: socio-historical factors; geo-political issues; “land grabs”; trials for crimes against humanity; the nature and direction of international aid; encouraging international cross-border co-operation – instead of disputes; re-uniting families; re-building cities devastated by war (like Dresden or Dubrovnik); etc.

They could also include: psycho-social re-education; establishing heritage sites; truth and reconciliation commissions (or similar); restoration of cultural identities and traditional languages; re-empowerment of the ‘tribes’; re-creating traditional (anthropological) ceremonies; as well as ‘up-dating’ these to fit the modern world.

This sort of meta-level work is not (yet) considered proper “psychotherapy”, but it is often very ‘psychotherapeutic’ – if designed specifically **for** (and **by**) the traumatised communities. There are certain sorts of persons, or people with certain qualities, who are drawn to do this sort of work. Some of these people are theorists, like Morton Deutsch (who developed the ‘Cooperative Model’), Roger Fisher & William Ury (who developed the ‘Principled Negotiation Model’), John Burton (who developed the ‘Human Needs Model’), and Baruch Bush & Joe Folger (who developed the ‘Transformative Mediation’ model), and John Paul Lederach (who developed the ‘Conflict Transformation’ model) ^[10]; some are psychotherapists, like Danaan Parry ^[11], Arnold Mindell (with what he calls ‘Worldwork’ or ‘Deep Democracy’) ^[12], and Susan Heitler (1990); and some are world leaders, such as Desmond Tutu (who promoted the ‘Truth & Reconciliation Commission’ in post-apartheid South Africa) and others, who are followers of reconciliation

theology (that helped promote conversations related to the unification of the two Korean governments and the reasonably successful Northern Ireland peace process).

These qualities include: a dispassionate compassion; a dedication to the welfare of others; access to resources outside of the traumatised culture, but also able to access the resources of those who have been traumatised; an agent of self-healing.

This work also has to become much more self-determined: the ‘external’ expert (psychiatrist, therapist, social worker, agency ... with “all the answers”) becomes replaced by the ‘trained-up’ individual, working more from within the culture, according to the realised needs of that culture, more specifically determined by those who have been traumatised within that culture.

Some work has been done also on defining the four fundamental principles for effective conflict resolution: (i) empathy is key; (ii) don't abandon your self-respect; (iii) it's not about winning and losing; (iv) maintain open communication going forward. Other theorists promote: managing stress quickly while remaining alert and calm; control your own emotions and behaviour; pay attention to the feelings being expressed; and be aware of and respect differences, etc. ^[13] Paying attention to the other person's body language, having the ability for quick stress relief, being emotionally aware and comfortable with your own feelings so that you can react in constructive ways: all of these are probably useful and necessary and they are also somewhat trite. The ability to resolve present day conflicts is somewhat superficial when dealing with age-old issues.

When Parcival, the naïve, innocent and newly-created knight of King Arthur's Round Table, quickly reached the Castle of the Holy Grail, set in the middle of the Wasteland and where the King is wounded, he just doesn't know enough to ask the Perilous Question: “How can the Wound be Healed?” This is the question that needs to be asked of people suffering from transgenerational trauma: again and again and again. Most of us do not know enough to ask the question: let alone trying to find an answer. Only the traumatised person can answer; and yet, often, their trauma gets in the way of the answer; and their initial answers may be wrong; indeed, they may even create more wounds. There is a very long road towards this level of redemption and healing. This – for me – is the true role of psychotherapy: helping people to find their own answers to their particular form of transgenerational trauma. And – as we have seen – there are very few people who have not suffered some form of transgenerational trauma. Even the privileged carry their own burdens, and often these are harder to identify – because of those self-fame privileges.

Yet, possibly, there is also (possibly / probably) another – much deeper – level of transgenerational trauma, or “soul wound”, that needs to be considered as well – because the

whole human(oid) race might turn out to be significantly traumatised – and that this trauma has never been properly ‘recognised’ and therefore has never been healed.

Somewhere, some-when, probably about sometime between about 100,000 years ago (according to paleoanthropologists and geneticists), a very small group (perhaps about 150) of humanoids (or proto-humans) moved “Out-of-Africa” (Lewin, 1987), across (what is now) the mouth of the Arabian (Red) Sea, via the Bab-el-Mandeb Straits ^[14] (when the sea level was a lot lower, probably due to glaciation). These migrants were – according to the evidence of mitochondrial DNA – the ancestors of the rest of (what we now call) the ‘human race’. However, what is significant is, nothing about the ‘fact’ of the emigration, but what actually might have ‘caused’ this migration? It was almost certainly not the first migration out of Africa ^[15], but it was perhaps – as DNA evidence now suggests – the most significant. Several theorists hold that the “gene pool” of the human race was actually found in, either the Sea of Afar (now the Afar Depression), and/or in the very similar Danakil Depression nearby – possibly both as both were, at one point in time, semi-inland shallow seas.

This theory, known as the “Aquatic Ape” hypothesis (Morgan, 1972; Hardy, 1977), that the evolutionary ancestors of modern humans apparently spent a significant period of time (about 4.5 million years, in the Pliocene era) during their evolution, in this region: and here they existed in (and adapted to) a semi-aquatic lifestyle, probably spending most of their time up to their necks in warm salt-water, giving rise to the ‘claims’ that the resultant physiological and biochemical changes actually ‘prove’ significant physiological changes during this period, like: “bipedalism”; ‘hairlessness’; subcutaneous fat; salt tears; a descended larynx (i.e. the ability to hold one’s breath); various aspects of human reproduction; and – with an abundant supply of shellfish – with which encephalisation (increased brain size) cannot otherwise exist.

What we know, geologically, is that these low-lying areas of Danakil and Afar were covered by a warm, shallow sea, for these preceding 4-5 million years, providing an ideal, safe and hospitable environment, not only for hominids to “see out” the Pliocene era of drought, but also that allowed the various proto-humans that lived there to evolve. This area is also the source of many of the earliest hominid fossils (e.g. “Ardi” – *Ardioithacus ramidus*; “Lucy” – *Australopithecus afarensis*; and ‘Gona’ – the site of the world’s oldest stone tools). This area might well have been the “Cradle of our Evolution” – a “Sea of Tranquillity” (rather than a “Garden of Eden”). From time to time (several hundreds of thousands of years apart), little groups left exploring the adjacent Great African Rift Valley that provided a sheltered, fertile pathway south, and these groups – at earlier stages of evolution – have become identified as various branches of *Homo Australopithecus* (*southern ape*); later evolutions, some of which moved north

included *Homo Erectus* and *Homo Habilis*, and subsequently *Homo Neanderthalensis*, etc. At some point, this productive ‘gene pool’ came to an end.

The point I am theorising is that a sudden “expulsion” from this ‘Sea of Eden (Afar)’ could have been very traumatic. Instead of being subjected to traumatic terrorist attacks or hurricanes, this specific area is an area of extreme geological activity, with the continual rifting and splitting of the African and Arabian tectonic ‘plates’ with the meeting point of the Red Sea rift, the Gulf of Aden rift, and the East African rift valleys. In reality, the “Afar Triangle” has probably been one of the most geologically unstable regions of the world – and it still is! ^[16] ^[17]

With respect to the issue of traumatisation, we have discovered – from recent studies of “9-11” survivors – that people who can run away ended up somewhat less traumatised than those who were confined (albeit safely) and couldn’t (van der Kolk, *et al.* 2005). But those survivors at least had somewhere to run to: our early ancestors – those that survived such incredibly catastrophic events – didn’t have anywhere safe. They were more like the survivors of Hurricane Katrina (Babbel, 2011), who were so significantly traumatised (as all their homes, livelihoods and lifestyles had been destroyed) that they became somewhat catatonic, incapable of anything but the simplest of re-actions. Their ‘safe’ home was destroyed: everywhere else was totally unsafe, and they had not evolved into those environments: they would have stay ever alert; they could never relax, rest or restore themselves.

If our ‘expulsion’ from this possible Garden of Eden actually happened in some way by a catastrophic geo-physical crisis, then it was not (perhaps) an angel with a fiery sword, but as a result of a ‘fiery’ tectonic upheaval with (maybe) rifts and vents of red-hot magma that cut off and prevented our return to the lost idyll: perhaps something similar to present-day eruptions. ^[18] And, whilst this area of north-east Africa, might have been where we humans peacefully evolved for so many millenia, it is also currently one of the most inhospitable, dangerous and uninhabitable places on the planet (bar perhaps the South Pole, or the Gobi Desert, or the middle of a war zone). We might – at some point in time – find some evidence, but we cannot find answers there.

It is therefore not beyond the realms of possibility that those original members of the human race, who had to leave – so suddenly, with their environment wiped out – were also severely traumatised, and thus we are all, every single one of us – unwittingly, unconsciously – still suffering from many millennia of unresolved transgenerational trauma. Indeed, this could even explain why the human race (supposedly *homo sapiens*) behaves so destructively and unlike any other species on the planet. So perhaps, instead, we should be called *homo vulneratis*. ^[19]

Now, this brings us back to the concept of these ‘psychic’ or ‘soul’ wounds. How do we – can we – possibly – heal these types of transgenerational wounds? We might fantasise about escaping our earthly problems by space travel and colonies on Mars, etc. – but we would

inevitably be taking our unhealed trauma – and our damaged selves – with us: to destroy other planets!

We probably need some sort of ‘angels’ to help us heal with these sorts of wounds. It has long been acknowledged that people’s life problems are not best addressed by just a cognitive-behavioural approach, however effective this may (or may not) be. The *raison d’être* of psychotherapy is therapy, or healing for the *psyche*; the spirit or soul of the person. This cannot be manualized; it needs a very compassionate, skilfully adaptable and empathic approach.

I am therefore reminded of Wim Wenders’ 1987 film, *Wings of Desire* (in German, “*Der Himmel über Berlin*”), loosely remade in 1998 as *City of Angels*. The qualities of ‘detached compassion’ are pre-eminent in the behaviour of the ‘angels’ from the outset, but – in each film – one angel decides to ‘fall’ and come down to the human level wherein ‘he’ experiences desire, pain and emotion. Is this symbolic? We psychotherapists may have to lose our dispassionate stance in order to help other mortals: but then we also have to take risks and can even become emotionally involved. Oh, dear! We also have to heal ourselves of similar deep wounds!

I was recently moved by two pieces of film of Desmond Tutu (shown because of his recent demise), one crying at / with the pain of the horrors he was hearing about in the Peace & Reconciliation Commission hearings; the other of him dancing for joy, laughing. We can learn from such people: they are our Avatars. ^[20] Maybe we need to do so.

I was involved, for many years, in helping people in Spiritual Emergencies (Young, 2011). This was a form of ‘soul healing’ as it helped people ‘emerge’ spiritually, not through any predestined, specific religious channel, but by following their own unique spiritual emergence process: it only became an ‘emergency’ when this emergence process became blocked or denied. I do not believe it is possible to heal any sort of deep traumatising without the work becoming ‘spiritual’ in some way or other. Spiritual, transformative work requires similar, but also different skills than mentioned earlier. So, again, we probably need to take something more of the ‘midwife’ – facilitative – approach in order to help the traumatised in their own, more self-directed healing processes. Furthermore, we may indeed have to have gone through our own ‘Dark Night of the Soul’ before we can be of any use to another person in a similar state. However, I am not sure that this particular transpersonal expertise is quite enough in itself.

What sort of training can help us, as psychotherapists, in this weird and wonderful role? Not only will we need the widest variety possible of techniques, insights and attitudes that the various theoretical and psychotherapeutic modalities can provide us with. But, we will also need something else: something that touches the soul – for sure; but also something else that touches these areas of greater expertise – an ability to work with such transgenerational issues. For that, we need to be able to contact the traumatised part deep within ourselves: to be ‘with’ the person in

their distress, in their pain, with their anger – at the oppressors, with themselves, and even at God, for allowing these incredibly disastrous things to happen – and keep on happening. How many of us can tolerate such a journey within ourselves? There is no ‘right’ answer, except from those who step forward to work, and who can work effectively, with people with transgenerational trauma. Brave souls indeed!

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Endnotes

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- ¹ DSM-IV's list of traumatic events include, but are not limited to, military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical assault, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.
- ² See http://www.war-memorial.net/wars_all.asp?sorted=yasc&q=3
- ³ Middle-Eastern wars since 1945: viz: the 1947 Palestinian Mandate civil war; the 1st (1948) Arab-Israeli war and the (on-going) Israeli-Palestinian war; the 1956 Sinai war; the 40-year Lebanese civil war; the various Arab-Israeli wars, including the 1967 Six-Day war and the 1973 Yom Kippur war; the (largely unreported) horrific 1985-88 Iran-Iraq war; the South Yemen 'coup'; the various 'oppressions' of the Shar of Iraq, Saddam Hussein (vs. Kurdistan), Asad in Syria, the 1st Gulf War 'Desert Storm', the 2nd 2003 Gulf War and its aftermath; and the various conflicts with ... the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Al Qaeda, and now Islamic State: this list is not inclusive and I have omitted all the Afghanistan 'conflicts'.
- ⁴ African wars & conflicts since 1945: viz: the Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian wars of independence; the 1950s Kenyan Mau-Mau uprisings; the Cameroon wars; the 1960 Congo crisis; the Angolan war of independence and then Angola v. UNITA; the Nigerian civil war; Rhodesia vs ZANU, ZAPU & PF; the various Ethiopian wars; the 1972 Hutu rebellion; Mozambique vs. FRELIMO; the Ugandan civil war; the Somalian civil war; the various conflicts in Sudan; the Rwanda civil war; the Burundi civil war; the Sierra Leone civil war; the various Algerian insurgencies; the Congo-Brazzaville civil war and the 1st & 2nd Congo civil wars; the Eritrea-Ethiopian conflict; Nigeria vs. Boko Haram; and this list is not inclusive.
- ⁵ This was as the result of the closure of the coal mining pits by Margaret Thatcher's government in 1984-5, which led to the miner's strike; and then due to the de-nationalisation of the British Coal Board under John Major.
- ⁶ Cuban Missile Crisis: in part, this was the end-result of the long-standing Spanish-American war(s) ending in 1898; followed by 50 years of Cuban 'independence' (under a US protectorate – exploitation or oppression?). Then came the 1959 Cuban Revolution (which nationalized a massive amount of property owned by US corporations), and, in 1961, the USA began seriously to try to undermine Fidel Castro's pro-Russian communist regime with the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion (and there were also 5 attempted US assassination plots to kill Castro). Following the 1963 Cuban 'Missile Crisis', there was 50 years of a US-Cuba "isolationist" policy – yet (interestingly) with the USA hanging on to a little bit of Cuba – Guantanamo Bay (and look what use was this put to in America's time of "crisis" – post 9/11).
- ⁷ Evidenced by: Thomas Hughes' (1857) very romanticized "*Tom Brown's School Days*" – though it acknowledged the bullying of 'Flashman'; Rudyard Kipling's – also slightly less romanticized (1899) – "*Stalky & Co*", depicting macabre revenge, snobbery, bullying and violence – as the 'norm'; Robert Graves' (1929) "*Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography*" – that described the actual school I was at, Charterhouse; Lindsay Anderson's 1968 film "*If ...*" that visually affirmed the oppressiveness of the culture; and – more recently – a much more open acknowledgement of the culture of homophobia, bullying, violence and sexual abuse (that has existed and still exists) in these 'cultures' (see: Joy Schaverien (2015) "*Boarding School Syndrome: The psychological trauma of the 'privileged' child.*" (Routledge).
- ⁸ Moore, L.D., Le, T. & Fan, G. (2012). DNA Methylation and its Basic Function. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, **38**, 23-38. doi.org/10.1038/npp.2012.112
- ⁹ "psyche" – soul, spirit, inner self, true being.
- ¹⁰ For more details of these 'peace' models, see Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies (IPCS): www.icps.org
- ¹¹ Danaan Parry, author of *Warriors of the Heart: A handbook for conflict resolution* and *The Earthstewards Handbook* (with Lila Forest), his legacy lives on in the PeaceTrees Vietnam program, which involves removing landmines and then revitalizing the land and the people.
- ¹² Arnold Mindell, developed Process Oriented Psychology, a combination of Jungian analysis applied with reference to body-oriented symptoms, and then applied these principles to social issues and conflict resolution in large groups.
- ¹³ HelpGuide: Conflict Resolution Skills: www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm
- ¹⁴ The straits at the mouth of the Red Sea between Djibouti (Horn of Africa) and the south-west tip of Yemen (Arabia).
- ¹⁵ *Homo Erectus* and *Homo Neanderthalis* had preceded this particular emigration, several hundred thousand years earlier.

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- ¹⁶ Since 2005 (i.e. in just the last 15 years or so), there has been a continuous sequence of earthquakes, with fissures hundreds of meters long and several meters deep appearing in the ground, and the valley floor sinking as much as 100 meters. Between September and October 2005, there were 163 earthquakes, with magnitudes greater than 3.9; as well as a volcanic eruption that occurred (within the Afar rift) at the Dabbahu and Erta Ale volcanoes.
- ¹⁷ A number of simplified maps showing the geography and geology of the Afar Triangle (AfarGEOLOGY.jpg) are available [here](#) – created by Robert Stern, Professor of Geosciences at the University of Texas at Dallas, (based on Beyene, A. & Abdelsalam, M.G. (2005). Tectonics of the Afar depression: a review and synthesis, *Journal of African Earth Sciences*, 41, 41-59) and released under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 license.
- ¹⁸ Present day eruptions (as of December 2021/ January 2022): Smithsonian Institute:
volcano.si.edu/gvp_currenteruptions.cfm
- ¹⁹ ‘*sapiens*’ – Latin for ‘wise’; ‘*vulneratis*’ – Latin for ‘traumatized’ (‘wounded’)
- ²⁰ Avatar: the Hindu version (a manifestation of a deity or released soul in bodily form on earth: an incarnate divine teacher), rather than the modern version (an icon or figure representing a particular person in a video game or internet forum)