

War: Mentalization and Totalitarian State of Mind¹

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Abstract

For most residents of Europe, war is a new experience in which they find themselves both as witnesses and participants. In this paper the war in Ukraine serves as an illustration and case example. Like any unfamiliar experience, war elicits profound emotional responses which can be so overwhelming that an individual may be unable to fully process them and to create mental representations of the reality of war. When the psyche becomes entrapped in an unprocessed state, without the capacity to derive meaning from it, this results in the “fossilization” of the psyche akin to what McGinley and Segal describes as a totalitarian state of mind. Subjectivity and individual differences come under collective or personal attack, or both. This state of being prioritizes the needs of the collective psyche over the individual psyche. The image of Gorgon Medusa, who transformed living people into “fossilized” ones, is presented as a metaphor of total identification with the collective dimension. In contrast, the psyche can reveal a creative approach to resolving war-induced trauma. This is depicted in the concept of the Alchemical Stone and its creation, which symbolizes a harmonious connection between the external and internal realms, the subjective and objective experiences, and the real and the imaginal dimension.

Keywords: alchemy, creativity, Gorgon Medusa, mentalization, reflective function, totalitarian state of mind, war, war-induced trauma

War as a New Experience and Individuation

Civilians in Ukraine had no experience of living through a war before it unfolded. People who were in the country at the onset of the fighting lacked both the skills to overcome real military threats or the knowledge of how to solve war-related challenges. A lot of mental patterns of how to live meaningful lives, including safety, aims, relationships, work, and love, that individuals had developed before the war, lost their relevance and

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significance. Huge external as well as internal losses and uncertainty either lead to deep grief or to push the ego toward active and creative restructuring and transformation.

On the one hand, living in a country at war makes new collective demands—a clear subordination to external restrictions and learning new external rules of life. The most basic new skills to acquire in times of war are usually those aimed at protecting life and safety, those used on a daily routine, mostly implemented at the behavioural level: going to the shelter after hearing an alarm, turning off the lights and closing the curtains before curfew, changing teaching or learning methods, especially providing lectures with students and pupils in darkness without electricity or internet connection. There are others.

On the other hand, war requires everyone to develop the subjective capacity for the processing of a wide spectrum of affective, emotional, and sensual experiences, the range of which is much higher than in peacetime. It also forces individuals to change one's personal priorities as to what is truly meaningful in life. Thus, situations or events to which it is not possible to adapt by using old patterns cause strong emotions and affects. Such affectively charged situations include:

- Missile attacks, bombings and other sounds or visual images connected with life-threatening events such as alarms, explosions, screams, crying, the flying of planes, and more;
- Physical injuries;
- Losing the past and memories through destruction of places that were associated with positive memories: schools, kindergartens, theatres, churches, homes, memorials, places of meeting people;
- Losing previous images of the future connected to work, career, money, relationships, expectations for the future;
- Getting to the front line, and fear of being sent there.

Another important source of strong emotions relates to what is conceptualized as moral injury (Jamieson et al., 2020). Moral injuries force people to change their views about relationships in the context of facing the amoral, cruel, and dehumanized behaviour of people during wartime. Such events include dying people in close vicinity, killing people (especially for soldiers who were civilians before the war), losing emotionally close people, bullying, abuse, dehumanizing content of propaganda, and others.

These affectively charged experiences cause a feeling of losing ground in old mental images of the world, life and relationships. Old models that are recognized as ineffective in some way must “die”. One can experience this as the death of previously acquired capability, what could be felt like “dying of the past” in the context of past images, patterns of relationships, and organizing one's life. In the process of this reconstruction, one is required to bury not only past images and skills but previously created dreams and plans,

something that could be felt like dying of the future. Alchemists would call this feeling *nigredo*. Sometimes it is very difficult for people to let die old mental patterns, images, hopes, plans and to start building life in a new context of war, with the associated great suffering. And yet, accepting this reality is very important during the war as otherwise future transformation and development are not possible, and a person can get stuck in trauma. There is a danger of burying oneself in grief over the losses. The alternative would be to “resurrect” by finding a new meaning in a new life through transformation and dealing with trauma.

Those experiences could push the ego towards the opportunity of developing totally new models of reactions, of mental processing, and of relationships. Such a severe and total restructuring of the ego forces it to draw resources from previously unreached contents of the self, on a collective as well as an individual level. If the connection between the ego and the self is impaired, the psyche can get caught up in the space of unresolved trauma in trying to deal with traumatic complexes. The ego must choose between being trapped in trauma or transforming past images and creatively imagining and symbolizing the present and future life.

To illustrate my ideas, I would like to present the transformational experience of my client. O. is a 40-year-old man who works as a physiotherapist in his private clinic. After the war had started, O. was ambivalent about going to the army. On the one hand, he was afraid to be killed by the enemy, and on the other, he felt obliged to become a soldier and guilty about not doing his duty. That is why at the beginning of the war, he decided to work as a volunteer with injured soldiers in the hospital. However, O. still felt guilty and even fearful of the soldiers’ opinion about him. This affected his professional capacities. Soon, all his work in his private practice became contaminated by the current complex. We both strongly felt *nigredo*’s processes during his analytical work. He was suffering from a lack of satisfaction and felt useless in his work with patients. Then a conversation occurred between him and one of the soldiers, which, I believe, provided what Jungians, following the alchemists, would call *calcinatio* (Edinger, 1985). According to Edinger, *calcinatio* reflects the process of intense heating, as a result of which all excess liquid evaporates, leaving the backbone of the meaning. The procedure consists of preparing the substance for further processing. During their conversation, the soldier directly confronted him with his feelings of guilt and fear. This conversation activated his defences and the desire for revenge for having been shamed. When we were talking about his experience, it became clear that this conversation constellated his father complex, which contains feelings of guilt, shame, disgust, and hate at the same time. We started to work with his father complex and soon after this he had a dream, which, as he admitted, changed his way of working with his patients.

I'm very big, like the famous hero Conor McGregor. I'm climbing a rock on a mountain, and I must hold a huge stone. Someone punctured my elbows, and it is difficult to hold the rock. I'm sliding down but an industrial crane lifts me up again. Then I feel that my arms are very weak, like they are made of cotton, like they have no bones. The stone slips out of my hands and I'm falling. It pushes me out and I fall on a large Gothic church with a cross on top of it. The cross pierced me, and it seems to me that I will never get out of this cross. But the cross does not let me die because the wound it made is closed by it. But If I get down from the cross, it will bleed. I realize that I cannot do this. I think about what to do next and wake up.

In the dream of O. shifting between meaningless and meaningful suffering was symbolized. The first part of the dream brought the metaphor of Sisyphus to my mind, depicting the meaningless suffering of my client. The second part of the dream, where the image of the crucifixion emerges, made me think about the process of inner transformation of my client, shifting from "Sisyphean suffering" to the "suffering of Jesus" or meaningful suffering. Sometime later this soldier, who had confronted my client and had provoked the process of *calcinatio* in his inner world, came back to him and asked my client for professional help. They started their cooperation and my client felt more confident not only with soldiers but also with his other patients. He started to work from the level of the Self rather than from the level of his father complex.

For adults with no previous experience of war, living during wartime results in a high level of uncertainty. It leads to feelings of helplessness and a loss of self-agency as these new war experiences bring a lot of unprocessed complexes from the past into consciousness. The encounter with such feelings can lead to a regressive restoration of the persona in the attempt of avoiding additional traumatization and hopelessness. The individual can then fall into a trauma complex loop. However, it also has the potential of leading to a process of individuation wherein old mental patterns die and unprocessed complexes can be processed, thereby opening a space for new possibilities to arise.

Creative Psyche v Trauma: Emotions, Feelings, and Neuroscience

The psyche is a function of the brain, responsible for the active representation of external reality in mental, ideal, and subjective images. The psyche can interact with external reality at two different levels: The level of reflexes (senses and emotions) represents a more basic communication between the psyche and the external world. In contrast, the level of reflection (feelings, images and thoughts), represents a more mature and developed way of subjective communication with the external world (de Gelder, 2006). Senses and emotions play an important role in the perception of the external world, involving the

whole body in the process of adaptation to the environment, while feelings are more complex and, according to Damasio, are mental representations of emotions (Damasio, 2003; Wilkinson, 2010). Feelings present a higher level of interaction with the external world—a reflective level—which helps one not only to react to events but also supports the desire of the psyche to find subjective meaning in the current situation. Human relationships are so complex and alive that they demand not only a reflexive level of communication but a reflective one. Creating healthy relationships requires a special ability of perception—mentalization, which provides for the creation of mental representations of relationships with people (Fonagy & Allison, 2012; Knox, 2011).

In situations where one experiences strong negative emotions, the process of creating a mental representation of the event as well as relationships associated with the event is blocked because of the necessity to react immediately to ensure safety and health. Therefore, when situations provoke strong negative emotions, it is not possible to easily understand their meaning and to treat relationships as living ones. An event that triggers strong emotions or affect and has no mental representation in the psyche can be considered a traumatic event. According to Damasio and Wilkinson, because of strong emotions and intense sensory experiences, the image of reality cannot be created in the psyche (Damasio, 1999; 2003; Wilkinson, 2010).

To understand the unrepresented traumatic experiences of people during wartime, it is also important to refer to the discoveries of neuroscience as well as the processes of alchemy and their metaphors for individuation. Neuroscientists point out that a strong feeling of fear in situations of threat is associated with the functioning of the amygdala. Among other tasks, the amygdala is responsible for the constellation of unconscious negative reactions and a loss of sense of time and space—in a way bringing on a felt sense of infinite suffering. In this context, Schore as well as Wilkinson associated the amygdala in the right hemisphere with unrepresented traumatic experiences (Schore, 2015; Wilkinson, 2010). The amygdala is connected with reflexive (instinctive) reactions to threats, but not with reflective ones. Thus, functions of the amygdala, I believe, could be represented in the alchemical process of *nigredo*—the first stage of creating a philosophical stone. During this stage a desire emerges to get rid of a real external threat by violent means like killing and destruction as soon as possible to protect life and the Self.

During the processing of these strong negative affects, the psyche must shift from a reflexive to a reflective level of processing, trying to find meaning in the life-threatening event which is already in the past. The first step in this process is to create an image of a threat, i.e., a mental representation of an event or the relationship with an abusive person. This step is associated with the function of the hippocampus in the left hemisphere. In this context, it is responsible for creating an image that has a temporal and spatial structure. Thus, in comparison to the amygdala, which is responsible for implicit memory and procedural automatic and quick reactions to events, the hippocampus accounts

for explicit memory formation and for creating mental representations of the traumatic event (Schore, 2015; Wilkinson, 2010). The hippocampus is associated with the first step of transforming sense impressions and emotions into the conscious experience of the person. To continue with the alchemical metaphor, it is possible to assume that the function of the hippocampus in image creation symbolizes the *albedo* stage in the process of creating the philosophical stone. In the *albedo* stage, the main idea is to get rid of previously dead parts of the past, leaving the backbone of the experience intact. At the *albedo* level of the processing of war-induced trauma, the corpus callosum is also important, as it integrates the negative emotions, such as fear, anger, sadness, guilt, with the images of those emotions (Cozolino, 2006). The corpus callosum provides a connection between the right amygdala and the left hippocampus. In situations where strong emotions and sense impressions cannot be represented in mental images, this results in dissociative defences. Due to dissociation, there is no connection between the real bodily experience in the physical and social world on the one side and the mental image of it on the other. In other words, the image does not correspond to the reality. The process of mental processing of sense impressions and emotions cannot be started, so the mentalization of traumatic events is blocked. Bollas calls this state of mind “the unthought known” (Bollas, 2018), and according to Wilkinson, it is “the old present” (Wilkinson, 2010). In our experience, art, such as music, is very beneficial in such situations (Shyroka, Kuziy & Semkiv, 2023).

Metaphorically, unrepresented experiences cause the psyche to get stuck in *nigredo* and prevent it from moving to *albedo*—a “cleaning” by finding meaning. Traumatic experiences tend to be re-experienced at the level of the sensory system (e.g., in PTSD), thereby returning to the psyche in the form of flashbacks, intrusions, panic attacks, etc., as if trying to create a mental image of the unrepresented event and relationships. The creation of the image of an event depicts the desire of the psyche to move to *albedo*—to clean itself from uncertainty and unknowing—to conceptualize, to find meaning.

The next stage of trauma processing is the integration of images of trauma into the autobiographical self. The creation of an autobiographical self is associated with the functioning of the orbitofrontal cortex (OFC). This part of the brain is responsible for generating self-images and autobiographical memory, which is structured in the form of narratives—stories about one’s own life (Gerhardt, 2004). An important role in the creation of the autobiographical self is also played by language, located in the left hemisphere. It is closely linked to the autobiographical self and its ability to create self-narratives (Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., 2002). I believe that the function of the hippocampus is more related to the mentalization of past or present trauma, while the functioning of the OFC is more related to symbolization—dreaming and creating the future.

Creating narratives of the war through art works is of the utmost importance to find meaning in the war trauma, as they provide not only for building a

healthier collective container for processing war events, but also for changing the matrix of cultural complexes and building new history. Creating the autobiographical self of our country refers to the highest level of self-agency and addresses what alchemists would call *rubedo*.

In the face of war, Ukrainians are now fighting with feelings associated with the *nigredo* process and trying to shift to *albedo*. But, perhaps it is not yet time for *albedo*, as the process of *mortificatio* (dying) is not finished. The whole of Ukraine needs more time to move to the *albedo* phase. As we are seeing now, the Russian culture, which affected and dominated almost all Ukrainians during the times of the Soviet Union, is dying in Ukraine (in the inner world of Ukrainians), and we Ukrainians must let this process continue to occur. So, we can move to *albedo* only partly—but even a partial process is good.

Mentalization of War-Induced Trauma and the Totalitarian State of Mind

Mentalization means a person's ability to understand the subjective inner world of people (oneself as well as others) and human relationships using the imaginative abilities of the psyche (Fonagy & Allison, 2012). Mentalization of trauma refers to the process of transforming a real relational threat into a mental image (a mental representation) of the threat. It is fundamental to meaning-making (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006) and drawing conclusions from past relational traumatic events. Mentalization involves imagination and the imaginal capacities of the psyche, as it is the process of creating images of the inner life of people. Thus, mentalized trauma is represented in the psyche as a living image after it has been reconstructed and transformed in contact with the self, which contains the developmental potential of the trauma and pushes the process of individuation on a personal as well as a collective level. In the process of mentalizing trauma, the psyche learns how to focus on experiences as all living organisms do and on the process of conceptualizing these experiences at the same time which is a characteristic of humans. Therefore, the ability to mentalize trauma leads to a transition from a reflexive type of reaction (reaction to inanimate matter—real threat) to a reflective type of reaction (reaction to animate matter—empathy).

It seems to be imagination that constitutes the substance on which the psyche draws when combining previously known fragments of the external world of the relationship with the other into a whole internal image. In such circumstances, the psyche can go beyond the boundaries of time, space and situation, thereby relying on the functions of memory, thinking and language. Thanks to imagination, partial sensory memory traces can fit into holistic images of relationships, like unique patterns in a kaleidoscope. Such content in the internal image of the world, on the one hand, reduces its realism and literalism, and on the other hand, it gives a chance of the integration of an

emergent internal reality, which indicates the individuality and subjectivity of the person. Reflecting on the relational experience provides an image of the experience and serves as entry into the “third position” and future symbolization. While mentalization is mostly directed to a past or current event, symbolization is directed to the future, as it serves to create something new within the psyche, something that has not existed yet. Thus, without mentalizing the past traumatic event, it is difficult to imagine symbolizing the future for the Self.

Mentalization plays an important role in human relationships. The ability to construct and reconstruct a coherent image of oneself and another person in one’s own mind while considering the negative and positive aspects of one’s own experience, is an important function of mentalization. It provides people with the ability to treat other people as living beings endowed with consciousness, the ability to develop respect for the differences between people and the ability to appreciate their subjectivity. In life-threatening situations of war with the priority for fighting, looking for shelter and defending oneself and others, however, the psyche more frequently uses reflexive levels of reaction, as it is important to react as quickly as possible. Such reactions are often associated with classical “fight-flight-freeze” responses. Such rapid and archetypal behaviour could be described as pre-mentalized states of mind. This state can lead to dehumanization and treating the other, potentially threatening person as inanimate matter as it could be dangerous to empathize with a menacing person. Pre-mentalized states of mind provide a low tolerance for differences, as differences are threatening as well. The person then identifies with collective, archetypal models of protecting life. Psyche will refuse to use its creative function, its subjectivity, as being too subjective means being unsafe. Such a state of mind is like a prison for the psyche in the case of a traumatizing event. Pre-mentalized states of mind relate to what can be conceptualized as defences of the Self.

Experiencing the core of a traumatic event causes an individual to deal with reality in a way that is more reactive than meaningful. The individual psyche is forced to regress to the level of reflexive reactions to events and must refuse to reflect on these events. The psyche must react faster than it can reflect. This often implies the dominance of the collective over the subjective and the instinctive over the individually developed. In the context of trauma, the archetypal (primitive) way of perceiving and processing the external reality of a threatening event may be even more effective and adaptive, as long as it is followed by a more mature, acquired way of processing external threads after the event.

The reality of war in the outside world, as well as in the media, is one of these traumatic events. But when the real threat is in the past, it is important to recover one’s mentalizing ability for the processing of PTSD symptoms. Psychotherapy and analytical support may be needed and could be recommended to help transform sensory experiences into images of those

experiences, to help people find meaning in events and to recover their ability to create healthy relationships.

Looking at the pre-mentalized state of mind from a certain perspective, this state can be called totalitarian. The concept “totalitarianism” finds its roots in the Latin word *totus*, which signifies wholeness, indivisibility, unity and completeness. From a political point of view, totalitarianism represents a political and social framework that restricts the existence of opposition parties, makes it illegal for individuals and groups to oppose the state and its directives, imposing an exceptionally stringent, if not total, degree of authority and oversight across both public and private aspects of life. From a psychoanalytic perspective, according to Segal and McGinley, totalitarianism relies on a set of beliefs advocating absolute power and omnipotence and the evacuation of negative aspects of oneself and one’s allies into the “Other”, individual or group. It is based on a splitting process, where one’s group or self is good, and the other is bad. Everything that is different becomes bad (McGinley & Varchevke, 2006; Segal, 2006).

A totalitarian state of mind is accompanied by a dehumanization of perceptions of people, avoidance of uncertainty and loss of tolerance for individual differences. The emergence of a totalitarian state of mind is caused by the fear of losing the integrity of the self, which activates the primary system of defences of the Self to preserve its integrity. With significant fear, all psychic energy is directed to the external world. Fear causes the splitting of external reality. Social objects are divided into “good” ones, those that are identical to the self and therefore predictable, and “bad” ones, those that are different from the self and therefore unpredictable and threatening. As a result of the split, the psyche becomes totalitarian: the dehumanization of “bad” social objects and the need for their further destruction are demanded. Totalitarian states of mind trigger an attack on differences.

In a totalitarian state of mind, as Czubinska (2020) notes, there is no ability to withstand the differences between people. Differences mark the boundary between one subjective mind and another, as well as between different cultures and ethnic groups. Under the conditions of political totalitarianism, participants in the totalitarian situation try to achieve unity and pseudo-integrity, attacking differences that cause fear through the manifestation of individuality and subjectivity (Czubinska, 2020). The goal of such an attack is to ensure order and stability by pushing people to identify with collective values. “Amputation” of differences in the context of totalitarianism is one way of building and seeking perfection or safety. In such a system, dialogue, cooperation and competition are impossible and social relations become intolerable too. As Czubinska points out, it is the awareness of differences that first becomes the basis for identity formation and then supports the process of individuation. The totalitarian state of mind and the need for complete control channel all creative energy into protecting the totalitarian state of mind (Czubinska, 2020).

Connolly (2003), in this context, succinctly links the inability to tolerate differences with the experience of terror and tyranny. Benbassat (2020) notes that insufficient development of mentalization is closely related to the tendency to unethical, domineering behaviour, while the predictor of ethical and moral behaviour is well-developed mentalization.

Gorgon Medusa as Metaphor for the War-Induced Totalitarian State of Mind. War in Ukraine as a Case Example for the Level of Projection and Projective Identification

Using the character of Gorgon Medusa as metaphor, I will bring an analytic eye to the psychic process during conditions of war, describe the totalitarian dynamic and show how the psyche of those who are victims of aggression can be infected by the totalitarianism of the aggressor. I will consider both the projection of the totalitarian state of mind on the enemy (Russia) and the projective identification of this state in the process of analysing Ukrainians who are infected by totalitarian dynamic in this war.

Medusa, the most famous of the Gorgons, was raped by Poseidon in the temple of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war. Athena punished Medusa for desecrating the temple by turning her hair into venomous snakes, capable of turning onlookers into stone. Metaphorically, it is possible to say that Medusa turns the perception of living people from an animate to an inanimate state, likened to a regression to an unmentalized totalitarian state of mind, wherein there are no individual differences in the outer world, and everything becomes static, dead, or stone-like. It could be speculated that Athena herself, as the goddess of war, in the moment of rage, was impaired in her capacity to mentalize and feel compassion for Medusa as the victim of male violence. The hero Perseus, advised by Athena, cuts off Medusa's head by looking at the reflected image (mirroring) of Medusa in his shield rather than at her directly. Thus, Perseus, using his shield, on the one hand, distanced himself from Medusa's projections, that helped him not to be "infected" by Medusa's totalitarian state of mind. On the other hand, he found a third position in creating the mental representation of Medusa. Thus, by using his imagination, he did not identify himself with his fear. Perseus then brings Medusa's head to Athena, who mounts it to her shield, which enables her to transform enemies into stone—the dark side of Athena. It is also important to bring into consciousness the fact that Athena uses the head of Medusa in war to defend her life, to keep her personal life clear of Medusa's totalitarian state of mind, and to integrate the dark part which is often split off. I believe that a deeper consideration of Medusa and her symbolic aspects can provide important insights as to how to deal with the

totalitarian infection that one's enemy brings to one's world—in this case how our enemy, Russia, brings this totalitarian infection to our country, Ukraine.

Totalitarian States of Mind at the Level of Projection onto the Enemy

Prevailing views hold that Russia is acting as if Ukraine has no right to have a separate history, a different culture, a different language and independent lands. In this war, Ukrainian “otherness” in culture and history is being killed. Cultural differences are being erased also at a literal level—at the level of killing the people who carry this culture. The enemy portrays Ukraine and its partners in propaganda as the “Empire of Evil”, while identifying itself as the “Empire of Good”. However, totalitarianism in the propaganda of “good” depicts the same totalitarian state of mind as totalitarianism in the propaganda of evil (Lefebvre, 2017). In this war, sadism becomes justified because it is superficially called the struggle for good. Russian actions in this context serve as an example of perverse morality at the collective level of the psyche. Murdered civilians and their houses are turned to stone. Such big losses, too, turn into stone the souls of a lot of Ukrainian civilians. As a result, our minds and souls become or should become totalitarian to protect our safety. Such fossilization is not the result of the individuation process of extracting an alchemical stone but is the result of the influence of the Gorgon Medusa. The creation of a philosophical stone is associated with love, while the influence of Gorgon Medusa is associated with hate, envy and fear.

This paranoid stage in Russia stems from the enemy's inability to identify with its own history. Identification of Russia with her own history and traditions, which originate from Ukrainian (Kyiv) history, as well as Mongolian, would allow Russia to identify with its own cultural heritage and take its respective place in the multicultural world community. The creation of her own rooted identity can lead to Russia's transition from invasive and expansive development to a qualitative meaningful sense of dignity in the global space.

Totalitarian States of Mind at the Level of Projective Identification

I would also like to consider here a dialogue with my client, which comes precisely from the constellation of the totalitarian state of mind in the analytical process.

This previously mentioned client, O., is Ukrainian and has no Russian roots. A month or two before the war, he began to have dreams with war-related content, with Putin and other prominent people involved. In these dreams, the characters appeared as ruthless tyrants and monsters, or homeless people. O., unlike others, was very afraid that the war would begin. In the first days of the war, O. calmly and cheerfully told me that he was flexible enough and

that if the Russian army entered the town, he would easily switch to the Russian language and help Russian soldiers as a physiotherapist so that he did not have to fear for his life. When I heard these words, I was overwhelmed with anger. I was mad. I could not think after hearing the words—my totalitarian state of mind was constellated because of my own fear. I asked him if he had lost anyone close to him in this war, and he said that he had—a neighbour with whom he played in childhood died at the hands of the Russian army. Then I asked him if he wanted to support and help those who killed him. He started crying bitterly. I felt how aggressive my words were, but at that moment I could not find a better way to bring him back to his subjective experience and break the thread of identification with the collective. When he was crying, I kept quiet, but there was a struggle going on inside me. It was my projective identification. It stopped when I realized what was happening and was able to touch his experience in my own inner world. His father, who was repeatedly hospitalized with psychotic episodes when O. was a child, behaved in a totalitarian and verbally aggressive manner towards him when he did not meet his expectations while he was developing his individuality, subjectivity and his masculinity. As a result, O. became a victim of bullying at school. At that moment, I realized that what I was hearing from him was a level of identification with the aggressor. The process in which I was involved was at the level of projective identification. He wanted to be like those who attacked him, he didn't want to be himself because he was afraid of being himself. I, in turn, wanted to kill the aggressor (Russia) by “killing his way of thinking”. It was only after I was able to find the space within myself that I could understand his subjective world and the suffering in his childhood that led to this type of defence. After this, an analytical conversation between us became possible. Later, O. decided to find a compromise—to work with the military in a civilian capacity on a volunteer basis.

The metaphor of Athena with the head of Medusa contains a wise defence in the face of war. The image of Medusa symbolizes the obligation to identify with some collective rules and values to protect national identity, language, cultural values, historical heritage and traditions at the collective level of the psyche. This identification makes it necessary to sacrifice some personal needs and values and touch on the feeling of being in the same boat. In the army, individual differences are neglected. This becomes manifest in some rules and obligations and also in the way of clothing with the same uniform for all—clothes that deny individuality and cover faces. Such interventions serve to help soldiers as well as civilians identify with the collective self. It is important in the process of identification with collective contents, though, to leave room for personal aims, needs and meanings. To combine the collective and the personal in a situation of war is difficult but important for the mentalization capacity to cope with the war-induced trauma.

Victory in this war will bring about new openings: it could increase the level of self-agency, and at the same time it will provide the opportunity to move out

of a paranoid position and enter a depressive one. The depressive position (*albedo*) and the processing of losses are prerequisites for further symbolization (*rubedo*), and symbolization is a form of entry into the individual world and the space of the inner being, conscious as well as unconscious. Creativity could be a way out of totalitarianism, as it is through creativity that a person manifests his or her subjectivity whereby individual differences become collectively acceptable and obvious. Pegasus emerges from Medusa's severed head. Pegasus is a metaphor for connecting the material and the spiritual, the real and the imaginary, and it is fantasy which is the source of the birth of the inner world after trauma. Individuality and subjectivity in wartime can be opened up through creativity and art, which are important aspects of the process of mentalization and symbolization of war-induced trauma. Creativity promotes individuation—the way to create a philosophical stone without turning into the stone. Next to projection and projective identification creativity is the third force, the imaginative force. Creativity is the shield of Perseus, as well as the image of Pegasus.

Summary

Life during war intensifies the feeling of suffering, but the psyche has options regarding which way to go through it: either by abandoning subjectivity, identifying with the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness about bringing back the old and lost past and potential future, or by restoring subjectivity in suffering through rebirth. The first path is the path of fossilization, the rejection of the subjective experience of real pain and thus identification with collective values and loss of contact with one's Self for the purpose of being safe. The second path is the quest for the philosopher's stone, the individual path of death for the purpose of resurrection in something new that did not exist before, something that would combine the collective as well as the personal Self.

The psyche has an imaginative nature, and therefore it is creative at its core. The decrease of the creative potential of the psyche and the loss of the ability to create mental images of reality reflect an impairment of its main function—the imaginal mental representation of reality. Metaphorically speaking, we can say that during times of war the psyche is at risk of becoming fossilized; it cannot fulfil the functions of living matter and it reacts to the outside world as if it were inanimate. Psyche loses its mentalizing function. Sense impressions and emotions cannot be transformed into conscious experiences. The process of individuation is blocked and the psyche is “frozen”. From time to time most people face a situation in which past traumas cause a blocking of psychic energy, which makes it impossible for a symbol to be born. Thus, mentalizing distressing events with an aim to support the creation of the future seems helpful in this case.

War affects people as if it were Medusa, who transformed outer as well as inner lives of people into stone. Myth has it that Perseus, using his ability to imagine and using his shield like a mirror, cut off Medusa's head, thus releasing her creative function as she gave birth to Pegasus in this act. Perseus received his shield and advice on how to use it from Athena, which may symbolize the role and significance of the relationship between Ego and Anima in the creative heroic war against Medusa. The image of Pegasus is associated with creativity and the connection of opposites. The aim of Ukrainians is to try to see Medusa through the mirroring in our shields and to cut off her head, giving birth to a renewed Ukrainian creative cultural life.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Pour la plupart des habitants de l'Europe, la guerre est une nouvelle expérience dans laquelle ils se retrouvent à la fois témoins et participants. Dans cet article, la guerre en Ukraine sert d'illustration et de cas exemplaire. Comme toute expérience qui sort de l'ordinaire, la guerre suscite des réactions émotionnelles profondes qui peuvent être si accablantes qu'un individu peut se trouver incapable de les traiter pleinement et de créer des représentations mentales de la réalité de la guerre. Lorsque la psyché se retrouve piégée dans un état qu'elle ne peut pas traiter, sans la capacité d'en tirer un sens, il en résulte une « fossilisation » de la psyché, semblable à ce que McGinley et Segal a décrit comme un état d'esprit totalitaire. La subjectivité et les différences individuelles font l'objet d'attaques collectives ou personnelles, ou des deux. Cet état d'être donne la priorité aux besoins de la psyché collective plutôt qu'à la psyché individuelle. L'image de la Gorgone Méduse, qui a transformé des êtres vivants en êtres « fossilisés », est présentée comme une métaphore de l'identification totale à la dimension collective. En revanche, la psyché peut révéler une approche créative pour résoudre les traumatismes induits par la guerre. Ceci est représenté par le concept de la Pierre Alchimique et de sa création, qui symbolise un lien harmonieux entre les royaumes extérieur et intérieur, les expériences subjectives et objectives, et les dimensions réelles et imaginaires.

Mots clés: guerre, traumatisme induit par la guerre, état d'esprit totalitaire, mentalisation, fonction réfléchie, Gorgone Méduse, alchimie, créativité

Für die meisten Bewohner Europas ist Krieg eine neue Erfahrung, an der sie sowohl Zeuge als auch Teilnehmer sind. Als Veranschaulichung und Fallbeispiel dient in diesem Beitrag der Krieg in der Ukraine. Wie jede unbekannte Erfahrung ruft der Krieg tiefgreifende emotionale Reaktionen hervor, die so überwältigend sein können, daß ein Einzelner möglicherweise nicht in der Lage ist, diese vollständig zu verarbeiten und sich eine mentale Darstellung der Realität des Krieges zu machen. Wenn die Psyche in einem unverarbeiteten Zustand gefangen ist und nicht in der Lage ist, daraus einen Sinn abzuleiten, führt dies zur "Versteinierung" der Psyche, ähnlich dem, was McGinley und Segal als totalitären Geisteszustand beschreibt. Subjektivität und individuelle Unterschiede geraten unter kollektiven oder persönlichen Angriff oder beides. Dieser Seinszustand priorisiert die Bedürfnisse der kollektiven gegenüber der individuellen Psyche. Das Bild der Gorgo Medusa, die lebende Menschen in "versteinerte" verwandelte, wird als Metapher der völligen Identifikation mit der kollektiven

Dimension dargestellt. Im Gegensatz dazu kann die Psyche einen kreativen Ansatz zur Lösung kriegsbedingter Traumata offenbaren. Dies wird im Konzept des alchemistischen Steins und seiner Erschaffung dargestellt, der eine harmonische Verbindung zwischen den äußeren und inneren Bereichen, den subjektiven und objektiven Erfahrungen sowie den realen und imaginären Dimensionen symbolisiert.

Schlüsselwörter: Krieg, kriegsbedingtes Trauma, totalitärer Geisteszustand, Mentalisierung, Denkfunktion, Medusa Gorgon, Alchemie, Kreativität

Per la maggior parte dei cittadini europei la guerra è un'esperienza nuova nella quale si ritrovano sia come testimoni che come partecipanti. In questo articolo, la guerra in Ucraina serve da illustrazione ed esempio. Come ogni esperienza sconosciuta, la guerra suscita risposte emotive profonde che possono essere così travolgenti che un individuo può non essere in grado di elaborarle completamente e di creare rappresentazioni mentali della realtà della guerra. Quando la psiche rimane intrappolata in uno stato non elaborato, senza la possibilità di trarne un significato, si realizza una "fossilizzazione" della psiche simile a ciò che McGinley e Segal descrive come uno stato mentale totalitario. La soggettività e le differenze individuali sono oggetto di attacchi collettivi o personali, o di entrambi. Questo stato dell'essere dà priorità ai bisogni della psiche collettiva rispetto a quelli della psiche individuale. L'immagine della Gorgone Medusa, che trasformava gli esseri viventi in "fossili", si presenta come metafora di totale identificazione con la dimensione collettiva. Al contrario, la psiche può aprire ad un approccio creativo per risolvere il trauma indotto dalla guerra. Questo è rappresentato nel concetto della Pietra Alchemica e della sua creazione, che simboleggia una connessione armoniosa tra i regni esterno ed interno, le esperienze soggettive e oggettive e le dimensioni reali e immaginali.

Parole chiave: guerra, trauma indotto dalla guerra, stato mentale totalitario, mentalizzazione, funzione riflessiva, Medusa, alchimia, creatività

Для большинства жителей Европы война является новым опытом, когда можно почувствовать себя как свидетелем, так и участником. Данная статья обращается к войне в Украине в качестве иллюстрации и примера. Как и любой другой незнакомый опыт, война вызывает глубокие эмоциональные реакции, которые могут оказаться настолько ошеломляющими, что человек будет не в состоянии полностью их переработать и создать ментальные репрезентации реальности войны. Когда психика оказывается в ловушке непереработанных эмоций, без возможности извлечь из них смысл, это делает ее "окаменелой" - МакГинли и Сигал называют подобное состояние тоталитарным состоянием ума. Субъектность и индивидуальные различия становятся мишенью для коллективных и/или личных атак. В таком состоянии существования потребности коллективной психики получают приоритет над потребностями индивидуальной. Метафорой тотальной идентификации с коллективным измерением является образ Медузы Горгоны, превращающей живых людей в "окаменевших". И наоборот, психика может найти творческий подход к разрешению травм,

вызванных войной. Это получило отражение в идее о поиске философского камня, символизирующего гармоничную связь между внешней и внутренней сферой, субъективным и объективным опытом, реальным и воображаемым измерением.

Ключевые слова: война, травма, вызванная войной, тоталитарное состояние сознания, ментализация, рефлексивная функция, Медуза Горгона, алхимия, творчество

Para la mayoría de los habitantes de Europa, la guerra es una experiencia nueva en la que se encuentran tanto como testigos y como participantes. En este artículo, la guerra en Ucrania sirve como ilustración y ejemplo de caso. Como cualquier experiencia desconocida, la guerra provoca profundas respuestas emocionales que pueden ser tan abrumadoras que un individuo puede ser incapaz de procesarlas completamente y de crear representaciones mentales de la realidad de la guerra. Cuando la psique queda atrapada en un estado, sin posibilidad de elaborar y sin la capacidad para hallarle un sentido, se produce una “fossilización” de la psique similar a lo que McGinley Segal describe como un estado mental Totalitario. La subjetividad y las diferencias individuales son objeto de ataques colectivos o personales, o ambos. Este estado de ánimo prioriza las necesidades de la psique colectiva sobre la individual. La imagen de la Gorgona Medusa, que transformó a las personas vivas en “fossilizadas”, se presenta como una metáfora de la identificación total con la dimensión colectiva. Por el contrario, la psique puede revelar un enfoque creativo para resolver el trauma inducido por la guerra. Esto se representa en el concepto de la Piedra Alquímica y su creación, que simboliza una conexión armoniosa entre los reinos externo e interno, las experiencias subjetivas y objetivas, y las dimensiones real e imaginal.

Palabras clave: Guerra, trauma inducido por la guerra, estado mental totalitario, mentalización, función reflexiva, Gorgona Medusa, alquimia, creatividad

战争:心智化和集权心态

对于大多数欧洲人来说, 战争是一个全新的经验, 人们即是目击者, 又身处其中。这篇文章以乌克兰为例来进行说明。和任何不熟悉经验一样, 战争激发很强的情绪反应, 有时候这种反应是压倒性的, 以至于让个体无法处理它, 以及无法为真实的战争创造出心理的表征。当心灵被困在一个无法处理的状态, 没有能力从中获得意义之时, 结果就是心灵的“僵化”, 这正如Segal所描述的集权心态。主观性和个体差异受到集体或个人的攻击, 或两者兼而有之。这种存在状态将集体心理的需求置于个人心理之上。美杜莎的意象在此被当作对集体层面完全认同的隐喻, 她将活人变成了“化石”。相反, 心灵可以揭示一种解决战争创伤的创造性方法。这一过程在炼金术及其创造的概念中得以体现, 炼金术象征着外部和内部领域、主体和客体体验、现实和想象维度之间的和谐联系。

关键词: 战争, 战争引发的创伤, 集权心态, 心智化, 反思功能, 美杜莎, 炼金术, 创造力
