AFTER THE WAR IS OVER, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION?: IMPRESSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

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Abstract. *Seven months after the collapse of Nazi Germany, the Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders and officials opened. In 1993, one of the first Acts of the South African transitional government set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It was charged by the Act to provide for the investigation and establishment of as complete a picture as possible of all gross violations of human rights committed during the period March 1960 to December 1993, and emanating from the conflicts of the past. Both the TRC and the Nuremberg tribunals were concerned with crimes against humanity. Both, implicitly, faced the problems of bringing sanity to insane societies, by enabling a reluctant society to face its past. In this article, I consider some of the emotional and social issues that I believe are still unsettled and that influence social and individual life in South Africa. Some of these issues are symbolised by the relationships seen in the workings of the TRC, in which such problems as unmasking myths, mourning and ending relationships often influenced what was going on at the hearings, just as they do in wider social life.*

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION.
In the preamble to the Act, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was instructed to restore human and civil dignity and to rehabilitate those whose human rights had been violated. It held frequent and open hearings throughout South Africa, which have been fully reported and freely discussed. The ruling party has itself been accused of human rights violations and admitted to and regretted its violations. The former government has shown no such frankness nor regret, nor collectively has any other official or quasi-official body. The TRC's proceedings have, therefore, made possible some significant degree of collective and individual expression of emotion about the past.

AFTER 1945: AFTER 1993.
Both the Nuremberg tribunals of post-1945 and the TRC after 1993 unintentionally and indirectly initiated a changing political psychology. Both were collectively "a decision to face pain rather than avoid it" (Symington & Symington, 1996:6). A main source of

healing is self-awareness and gradually a collective self-awareness is emerging in South Africa, though it is far from the impressive honesty of post-1945 Germany.

Nazi ideology and myths and those of apartheid were animated by a hatred of human equality and by quasi-magical fears of contamination by peoples labelled as "inferior" or "primitive". There is little to distinguish the two racist ideologies and their myths, though their practices differed in significant respects, in particular by the Nazi attempts to annihilate feared or despised groups.

Fundamental social and political changes, such as the abolition of apartheid, are not necessarily accompanied by fundamental changes of collective attitudes and myths. It is far too soon to be clear to what extent and in what areas of living the racist "old" South Africa persists, disguised or blatant in the non-racist "new" South Africa. It is, however, fair to claim that the TRC attempts to encourage genuine confessions by those who carried out acts of politically-motivated violence and to expose feigned confessions. Many of those responsible for administrating and organising violence have never come before the TRC. The TRC also provided a safe forum where victims, their families and friends could feel free to be heard to relate their experiences and to express their rage, bitterness and hurt. Because of its very public theatricality (and this is not meant in the least pejoratively), the TRC may have prompted a collective questioning of racist myths that seek to absolve those who consciously or unconsciously hate and persecute those of another "racial" group. I believe that it is not possible for normal men and women to shield confidently behind racist, ethnic or even class myths when they have to face the distress and anger of their victims.

Once those formerly without power have voices, identities and rights, then the myths that sought to justify violence and repression are no longer beyond challenge by those whom the myths stigmatised. Those once-powerless, voiceless and with an arbitrary, enforced group identity are no longer faceless and voiceless, but individuals with some feelings of control over their personal lives and over those in power. Alas, society still is divided between those with and those without power; those who need to exercise power and those for whom equality is emotionally satisfying.

It can be argued that the TRC provided a possibility for collective catharsis because of the abreactive effects of accusation and confession. Hayes (1998) is sceptical about applying the metaphors of catharsis to collective abreactive. He asks whether South Africans collectively share memories about apartheid and feelings about those memories. Is it enough to assume that South Africans share solely because they see perpetrators and victims meet and be compelled to communicate with one another, directly or indirectly, at a conscious or at an unconscious (and possibly phantasy) level? Hayes maintains that the TRC was truly abreactive collectively in as much as it empowered ordinary people to talk publicly about their pasts and how goverments had made them suffer. The TRC set in motion a psycho-political movement new to South Africa, although members of the TRC may have been only dimly aware of it.

Hayes movingly appreciates the TRC's integrity and concern, but asserts that it has missed opportunities for reconciliation and rebuilding South African society. It has been

less than aware of how individuals, perpetrators and victims alike, have lived together. They live together now and will continue to do so in a changing society in which all its members can - indeed, must -participate as equals if democratic change is to be an emotional as well as a socio-political reality.

MYTH AND SOCIAL CHANGE.
Individually and collectively our lives are influenced by uninvited bits of our past and are assaulted by unwelcome bits of the present and fears about the future. Myths are our dramatised defences against our pasts, the present and the future. They insulate us, rarely adequately, from our personal anxieties and the threats that we fancy exist in our social worlds. Myths are therefore pseudo-histories, emotional truths that are also in reality untruths. Individually and collectively myths *need to be believed* in order to neutralise an imagined reality that is too threatening, scary, disappointing, anxiety- or guilt-provoking to be endured.

The illogical "logic" is in the heads of the believers. The contradiction is between reality and what the believers wish their world was like. Ethel S Person's study of "the force of phantasy" shows that myths are far more than a retreat from reality: individually and collectively they are constructions of a dreamlike, personal world that provides an alternative existence free of the dangers of the real world. Aggressive phantasies are particularly dangerous and "persuasive when the inner needs and conflicts of the individual converge with the shared fantasies and myths of the group" (Person, 1996:190). Apartheid's myths converged with the individual myth of the family romance: that *we* are all one "ethnic", "race", "national" ... group, whatever others say we are; and we are going to fight to stay that way, if we have to! But, implicit is the repressed suspicion that we are not in reality one happy family, without jealousies, insecurities, conflicting interests and unnacceptable libidinous wishes. The family romance is a desperate attempt to live in an enclosed world where the members live safely and happily ever after, without either internal or external threats. Hitler's Reich was going to last for a thousand years! Apartheid was for ever!

The TRC was not only involved in uncovering the past by retracing the steps taken to conceal, distort and sanitise it. It was also deeply involved in the psycho-social process of reconnecting: myth and the irreality from which it is formed, victimisers and their victims, damaged selves and a society that is aware of the need to heal individuals collectively.

South Africa and the TRC as its symbolic representative, confronted complex and painful problems in its uncovering of the past. Powerful emotional resistances, individual and collective, had to be overcome so that unconscious wishes and fears that many would have preferred to leave hidden could be revealed and interpreted and the feelings that they aroused could be worked through.

But many disturbing questions have been ignored, or, if acknowledged, meagrely investigated. Why did leaders and followers for so long imagine that it was safer to live within the protection of the racist myth than to try to rationally solve the problems of reality? Why was the myth upheld with increasing social and political violence? What

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were the fundamental symbolic dangers and threats felt by protagonists in the struggles for power? What were the realistic dangers and threats? What injuries to the collective narcissism were unconsciously feared if the mythical shelter ceased to be sheltering? Was there any unconscious collusion between the protagonists? Did they both depend upon a myth of their collective identity and their innate separatism? The demands of reality *may* destroy a myth, but only a reorienting of values, relationships and the perception of threats can neutralise the emotional, untruthful, dysfunctional nature of living by a myth. One group's myth is often the opposing group's reality.

The fundamental question that the TRC was unable to grapple with was: how does South Africa begin to destroy the dysfunctional myths that discourage social changes towards an emotionally democratic ethos? The TRC confined itself to searching out the "facts" of apartheid's last years. It was arguably without either the mandate or the expertise to imagine and evaluate socio-political and educational systems that could conceivably *defuse* old myths and make it possible for groups to perceive one another as benign or, at least, unthreatening.

MYTH AND MOURNING.
Myths must be confronted and dispelled collectively so that the past can be mourned or the society's political and social ghosts will never rest. The TRC, whatever its mandate and however it perceived its rôle, was in effect South Africa's principal mourner. It therefore carried a heavy emotional burden: the anger and distress of those people who were unable or unwilling to mourn for themselves, because they could neither accept the reality of their individual pasts nor that of their society.

Mourning is emotionally exhausting. It is both an ending and a beginning. It is still an intensely embarrassing question to ask whether South Africa has yet significantly ended by mourning its apartheid past , in order to free itself to adopt a democratic, nonracist present in all of its social, political and economic institutions.

Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich devoted an unsettling book to the problem of the "inability to mourn", which they see as an enduring social psychological episode in a nation's history. How can the survivors, especially those who have killed or allowed the killing, confront their experiences, their shame, guilt and its moral consequences? If individuals or groups fail to confront the past, survivors "must remain locked in silent and explosive conflict" (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975:ix) within themselves.

Many social psychological conditions frustrate the ability to mourn, among the more persistent of which is the tenacity of individual and collective myths, rationalisations and denials to thwart the experience of guilt, shame and remorse. Delusional distortions of reality, the conscious and unconscious blotting out of memories, blaming the past on the wickedness of leaders and the gullibility of misled followers, the pressures of conformity and the refusal to consider the psycho-political consequences of repression and violence, together combine to create powerful myths that "justify" denying a nation's actual and moral loss.

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Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich interpret mourning as a form of restitution during which mourners work through the conflicts and ambivalences that are aroused by their loss. Mourners, individually or collectively, consciously or unconsciously, respond to some worrying doubt. Did I, did we, cause the loss? In what ways are we responsible for it? Could the loss have been prevented had we acted otherwise? Did we have a moral duty to act otherwise? Am I, are we, unconsciously guiltily or ambivalently relieved that the past has passed in reality, but not in the collective and individual psyches? How can guilt and shame about the past be denied? Often a myth is created specifically to deny guilt and shame: apartheid and Nazi Germany both have their apologists.

But there are more disturbing self-questionings. Am I, are we, unconsciously proud that we had the power (magical, phantasy or in reality), to cause the loss? Or is the power for revenge of those who were destroyed, unconsciously dreaded? The morbid inability to mourn is self-punishing, the self is judging itself as so bad that it does not deserve the release that mourning can bring.

Mourning, Freud (1917) observed, is a gradual process that is slow and painful for some mourners and painless for others. Some mourners may be in denial, others may be blameless, many deny the irreversibility of loss by retreating into phantasy: "There wasn't any loss! I didn't cause any loss! The loss occurred despite my conscious intentions - I was forced by circumstances!" People, individually or collectively, may be unable to mourn because they feel "too humiliated, too angry, or too helpless... or the opposite, too guilty" (Volkan, 1994: xxvii). The original traumatic loss is replaced by a myth, an emotional substitute for reality, and the endless tension between myth and reality prevents mourning. Volkan also observes that groups need objects to symbolise the loss and to allow "an illusion of control" (Volkan, 1994:165) by being psychological containers for the group's unresolved feelings. Monuments to the individual or collective dead both remind us of the dead so that we can mourn them; and remind us that the dead have still to be avenged before they can be mourned and put to rest.

MOURNING AND RECONCILIATION.
The mandate to make reconciliation possible did not insulate members of the TRC from being emotionally disturbed by the need to mourn the past. Nor did their mandate insulate them from feelings excited by the involved relationships of the hearings, specifically, and society generally.

Symington and Symington (1996) have described the "fusion" that occurs between individuals, even when they meet in circumscribed roles, if there is even the smallest space for them to meet as people. Individuals often unconsciously collude so that by satisfying one another's needs and relationships, an acceptable piece of reality is concealed and repressed. On the other hand, an aspect of reality may be welcomed and overemphasised because of its myth-like capacity to deflect them from what is unwelcome.

The moving nature of the TRC was not dissimilar to the intimacy and emotion generated by psychotherapy. Even the strict legal ethos and procedures of, for example, the Nuremberg tribunals, could not have ensured emotion-free and objective

hearings, judgements and communications. How could it be confidently asserted that the TRC was not fused with victims, identifying so closely with them that it was difficult or impossible objectively to discover and assess the "facts"? Conversely, those seeking amnesty may have been unconsciously rejected as so immoral or blameworthy that their possibly sincere remorse was disbelieved.

All people have their personal sensitivities and are aroused emotionally to fear, anger, hostility and guilt. These unconscious feelings and the relationships that arouse them, distort our judgements. Emotionally arousing appeals by victims or their violators may divert attention from objectively analysing how phantasy and reality have interacted in the lives of individuals. If truth is to be reached and mourning to go ahead then 'what matters is how each individual and each group manages to become aware of its own specific self-deceptions and thereby learns to overcome them" (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975:17). The myths and phantasies that nourished self-deception must be seen in their unreality.

Writing about post-Nazi Germany, Money-Kyrle (1978) considered that very many Germans were depressed by Germany's defeat, and that such a collective depression might spontaneously be lessened in two ways. Either it could be alleviated by making reparations and showing remorse collectively, or there might be a flare-up of paranoid aggression against those who were once victims and who might now be seeking revenge. Former victims become victims again, blamed for creating the guilt and shame that caused the depression and the failure to ease the depression. It is not yet clear in South Africa whether post-apartheid euphoria by Africans and panic by many whites is compensated by deeper, latent depression. But there are some signs that the delusional myths that discourage mourning have still retained their powerful cathexis, for example, there are political groups that still overtly or covertly live with the phantasies that "the blacks want to deprive us of our culture and our identity", that "whites are reluctant to share their wealth or to demonstrate their loyalty to a new South Africa". Scapegoating, projecting uncertainties onto a convenient target-group, is an alternative to mourning when the myths and phantasies about the past are emotionally active among many people.

FORGIVING, REPAIRING, ENDING?
Freud (1917) and Klein (1950) attached the greatest importance to the need for reparations, for undoing one's destructiveness, and for forgiving oneself and accepting the forgiveness of one's victims. If individuals or groups of individuals are so steeped in guilt or committed to denial that they are unable to make reparations that satisfy them and their victims emotionally, then they may regress into primitive, self-destructive and self-punishing guilt and depression.

Normally, if the ego is faced by a reality in which "objects" are damaged, destroyed or wished away, then the anxiety-provoking fact has to be accepted that *this* ego, too, is vulnerable and could be damaged, destroyed or wished away. The inability to offer reparations is a refusal to accept blame for one's own or one's society's destructiveness. It is a narcissistic regression to the comforting illusions of childhood omnipotence, when self-blame might be neutralised (for the time being) by projecting

guilt and aggression onto others and retreating into an inviolable phantasy world. Freud and Klein considered that "normal mourning" was an activity of the reality-testing, reality-coping ego: for the emptiness in reality to be filled, grief and anger must be freed to be expressed spontaneously and safely. Therefore, the emotional significance of post-apartheid exhumations and identification of victims cannot be exaggerated.

Aggressors often unconsciously fear the return of their aggression and the revenge of those whom they have dehumanised, either transformed into ghosts or still living and dangerous. In South Africa, for example, there are whites who accuse Africans of harbouring anti-white anger and of plotting to destroy white identity and culture, in terms similar to white racists' anti-black fearful anger. To repair the damage done by psychological and social violence is made more difficult, even impossible, because of the persistence of what Klein calls "the Nazi attitude". Here, "the attacked objects have turned into evil and must therefore be exterminated. The object turns into a potential persecutor, because retaliation by the same means by which it had been harmed is feared" (Klein, 1950:322). Mertus (1997) is sceptical of the psychological appropriateness of war crimes tribunals because they are so constrained, legally and politically, that they cannot develop psychotherapeutic skills nor offer symbolic, compensatory reparations that might serve collectively to defuse these unstable fears and relationships.

It has been observed that authoritarian persecutors give "the impression of being unable to conceive of any morality other than the morality of unquestioning obedience" (Money-Kyrle, 1978:34). The denial of shame and guilt is based upon identification with authoritarian leaders and an uncritical acceptance of their morality of persecution. Money-Kyrle notes too that a political failure that leads to social failure may arouse a "sense of collective guilt of a genuinely depressive kind ... apparent [even] behind a truculent defence" (Money-Kyrle, 1978:243). The "truculent defence" has barely been touched by the TRC hearings, and it is still latent behind the emotional turbulence of South African politics. Both former victims and former perpetrators collectively oscillate between expressing guilt and self-justifying bravado, and the opposing collectivities, white and black, are still intimately locked in scrutinising one anothers' motives, searching for signs of aggression and double-dealing.

Lumsden's (1997) discussion of how to break "the cycle of violence" applies also to the "truculent defence" of violence, and how to safely release the self-aggression that underlies guilt and shame. He argues that "warriors", the violent ones and those who vicariously enjoy violence, actual, social and political, must be integrated into a society with an unviolent ethos as warriors-no-longer. The ambivalence towards the violence of the past must be directly confronted as an unequivocal condemnation of violence and a refusal to accept arguments that support it. Social and political techniques and a collective anti-violent ethos must begin to control it. The "pollution of death" can only be cleansed by a collective mourning in which victimisers and the victimised actively and jointly participate. This is yet to happen.

Jaques (1955), Lyth (1988) and Stein (1994) have studied the practical difficulties of unearthing and moderating the anxieties and the infantile dependency relationships that are transformed in adulthood into defences that create phantasy social relationships. Anxiety, aggression and countering blows to narcissism need to be neutralised or contained. If they are uncontained they may be dangerously and destructively projected onto target individuals or groups. A nation, a group, a family, therefore constructs, and can only survive with, its own, unique "social defence system ... helping [or enabling] the individual to avoid the experience of anxiety, guilt, doubt and uncertainty ... by eliminating situations, events, tasks, activities and relationships that cause anxiety ... or [that] evoke anxieties connected with primitive psychological remnants in the personality" (Lyth, 1988:63). Racism is one such very inadequate social defence system. It creates and enforces situations and relationships that arouse anxiety by encouraging or compelling people to live partly in a phantasy world that is inhabited by uncanny, threatening, corrupting and dangerous Others.

Stein (1994) has shown how repairing and ending, reconciliation and reparation work similarly for individuals and groups. "Therapy" for troubled individuals and groups is to treat the anxieties that create the feelings of threat, vulnerability, low self-esteem and unsatisfying ego boundaries. It is necessary to penetrate the social defences in order to lessen the aggressive, repressive splitting that drives individuals and groups to search restlessly for, and to depend upon, phantasy enemies. Stein maintains that one of the most demanding problems in group dynamics is how to encourage spontaneous talking about threats and phantasies, instead of acting them out violently. He also suggests that a phantastic construction of "reality" is usually legitimated by an ideology, for example Nazism or racism. Moreover a "group memory of reality" may become a group trance: the group or individual seals itself off within a world in which the phantasy of "we-ness" is justified by a group-memory of a feared, phantasy "other-ness". The uncanny Others are obsessively scrutinised and may reappear in group-phantasies as if they were creatures in a nightmare. The more intense the scrutinising, the more urgently and obsessively an ideological legitimation is perfected to justify it, and the more that hostility is attributed to and projected upon the uncanny Others. A cycle of hostility and projected hostility is started, the uncanny Others are perceived anxiously as though they were witches, and once started, such paranoiac anxieties and fears feed on themselves.

Stein (1994) summarises the dynamics of peacemaking. They seem suited to the TRC process in South Africa. The essential proposal is to keep dialogue going between opposed groups, creating many possibilities for them to work and live together and to exchange ideas about each other as people and about one another's cultures. He concludes with "the need to begin thinking of informal processes - albeit sanctioned by official structures - for softening recalcitrant group self- and enemy-images" (Stein, 1994:391) in all conceivable ways from sports to mourning the nation's history, from sharing educational facilities and teachers to learning about one another's music, literature, drama and culture.

CONCLUSION: CLOSURE AND THE TRC.

What then could have been done better to further reconciliation? It may be that "official acknowledgement, apology and reparation may play [a part] in hastening a sense of closure after horrific events" (Summerfield, 1997:1393), but closure is impossible while pollution remains from the previous régime. "Apartheid still lives on. Whites still see Africans as less than human beings", an African friend said to me sadly as I wrote this article. Closure depends upon challenging and banishing the myths and phantasies that inspired the repressive society.

Was there too little challenging, let alone attacking, of the racist's myths? A Manichean world had been created by Apartheid, split into perfect Us and bad, dangerous Them. Somehow it now has to be spontaneously appreciated that, although it is painful, it is necessary that collectively what was repressed or denied must be made conscious, that the collective ego's myths and phantasies be so weakened that they can no longer be significant as defences. To slightly adapt Schneider's comments on peace and paranoia: "If we are fearful of making peace with others, it is because we perceive a threat to our collective self, to our integrity ... Making peace with others forces us to relax our strict boundaries ... Meeting other with opposite views from ours enables us to give up our overt hostility" (Schneider, 1998:208).

The TRC, despite its courage, did too little to hasten a sense of closure because it too rarely confronted the irrationality of racist narcissism. It too easily allowed the persistence of both a "striking lack of any signs of inner crisis" (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975:33), and the tacit denial of guilt. It failed to rally a collective movement away from narcissistic self-love and Other-hate "towards a recognition of our fellow men ... [by] correcting false and restrictive consciousness, [and by] discovering a capacity to feel compassion" (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1975:67).

Acknowledgements.

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