

When a country like Armenia undergoes so many historical and political changes in a reasonably brief time, its society makes great transformations to adapt to a new reality.

The research in which I proved my thesis on how the *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* disturbs the mourning process in its survivors and descendants, might explain psychologically the origin of certain transformational phenomena in the Armenian society.

Armenian Psychological Trauma.

Armenian people have lived a lifetime of psychological anguish and endurance to all types of sufferings because of their history of persecution and discrimination. Armenian psychological trauma can be applied to different periods, but my psychoanalytical investigation is centralized in the consequences of the *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* as a psychological trauma.

The psychoanalytical definition by Freud of psychological trauma is applied to describe an event in the person's life characterized by an excessive inflow of stimuli which causes the inability to react adequately, causing disorders and lasting pathological effects in the psychological organization.

The events of the Armenian Genocide with proceedings of violent atrocity are considered to cause a psychological trauma, even though its origin is different from an isolated traumatic event. The trauma of genocide attains another dimension in magnitude because it means years of continuous terror, physical cruelties, distressing hunger, loss of family, contemplation of torture, and murder of other human beings. Such events are expressed in an undeniable psychic suffering which goes beyond human tolerance, corresponding to a long-lasting trauma with difficulties in its psychological elaboration.

The Armenian Genocide as psychic trauma involves two dimensions:

A) *The Impact of the Trauma* because of the violence of the slaughters in the massive extermination.

B) *The Denial of Facts* as an essential piece in the genocide project which intends to remove all traces of the crime, using State strategies of concealment and secrecy to accomplish the premeditated mass massacre.

Therefore, the condition of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide includes two strongly related factors: (a) *The original trauma*: as disintegrating impact on personality.

(b) *Permanent effects of trauma*: as an omnipresent and unavoidable threat.

For that reason, the constant denial of the existence of the Armenian Genocide is an absolute threat that perpetuates the impact of trauma. Regarding the psychological reaction, Bruno Bettelheim (1981), survivor of the Jewish Holocaust, establishes three different answers to extreme trauma in survivors:

1. A group of survivors lets the experience destroy them.
2. Another group tries to deny any lasting effect.
3. A third group starts a fight which might take his whole life, for the sake of remaining conscious.

Denial of the Armenian Genocide.

In order as to explain, "*What are the implications of the Denial of the Armenian Genocide for the mourning process in survivors and descendants?*" two aspects on denial must be explained.

1. Denial as an element in the ideology of every genocide project with its consequent psychic effects in survivors and descendants.

2. Denial as a psychological defence mechanism of the Armenians which include two spheres.

2.1. Denial: psychological consequences are distinguished as regarding the lack of recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

2.2. Denial: psychological effects upon the unbearable trauma of genocide.

The *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* has been carried out by the Turkish State from its beginnings, not acknowledging its existence and therefore, continuing their genocide plan until nowadays.

The refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide is not a mere denial of the dead; it places death in a dimension of destruction and non-existence, which equals to the removal of all traces of the crime. The *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* makes the genocide perfect: those dead have disappeared, they have never existed, and therefore, those unrecognized deaths disturb the relationship between the survivors and their historical past.

When the permanency of the lack of recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish State continues, it reinforces the destruction of the mass murder. The erasing of the dead when they are not recognized means that the dead become the object of an historical denial from the collective memory, disturbing the process of mourning in survivors and descendants of the Armenian Genocide.

The complexity of a genocide project includes the destruction of all traces of a human group: it consists on annihilating not only individuals but also all their cultural inscriptions, *attempting to eliminate the origins of its history and collective memory*.

The extermination of individuals, together with the destruction of their culture, has the objective of suppressing all possible inheritance of a people and the memory of their ancestors; that is to say, the extermination implies *the destruction of the cultural identity* that identifies them. Without traces to witness the existence of a people's culture, the intention is to destroy the identity, the symbolic system and the historical memory.

The lack of recognition of the Armenian Genocide updates the trauma of genocide because the Armenians feel the crime is perpetuated: *those deaths never existed* (Piralian 1994).

The other aspect of the *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* is the psychological defensive mechanism in survivors and descendants when facing horrifying scenes, using denial so as not to remember the shocking scenario. The psychoanalytical concepts of the *denial* mechanism according to Freud, refers to the way an individual, when describing his feelings, thoughts or desires until that time repressed, defends himself from them by refusing that they belong to him. Therefore, the denial of the collective trauma appears in Armenians as a defensive mechanism when there is a refusal to recognize the reality of the traumatizing perception of the Armenian Genocide.

There are two different situations of denial which are linked and which has disturbed transmission of history: (a) survivors used denial to prevent remembering the horror of death, (b) descendants used denial when they avoided hearing the violent atrocities the generation before had suffered.

Mourning and Trans-generational Transmission.

The impact of the Armenian Genocide trauma creates an unbearable memory with psychological effects transmitted through generations: it turns out to be a non-elaborated circumstance on the deceased, and produces a disorganizing and deadly effect.

The transmission of trauma through generations is done by means of complex ties that bind them with the predecessors. This can be done by conscious mechanisms, though most of it takes place unconsciously.

Psychological inheritances are transmitted and unresolved traumas suspended in the unconsciousness of parents and ancestors are transferred like a strange body from one generation to another. The main work on the Freudian issue about transmission and inheritance during unconscious psychic processes is *Totem and taboo* (1912), in which Freud distinguishes two ways of transmission: one is related to tradition supported by the cultural and social apparatus, which guarantees the continuity between generations; the other one is composed by the psychological life of generations that is incorporated from the prohibitions that become part of the unconscious.

When there is denial of a reality because of the terror experienced, the painful past falls like a shadow upon a generation that remains silent and the creation of a secret is transmitted upon the descendants.

The unspeakable horrors that had left traces in the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, and its evil consequences with an oppressive atmosphere are still present in the transmission to their descendants. Witnesses of a traumatic reality must face the social speech as something that is denied or avoided. Helplessness in their experience transforms the trauma into un-integrated fragments inside the psychic structure, and breaks in the mind like something incomprehensible and unspeakable. This unspeakable emptiness is generationally transmitted like a *psychic tomb*, where survivors must receive those that disappeared. In this way, *a postponed mourning is transmitted to the second generation*, in which the dead body is incorporated like the only trace; suspended in the survivor's psyche, the corpse is enclosed like a secret, protected. The traumatic experience, psychologically non-elaborated, becomes *unspeakable* in the first generation, then *unmentionable* in the second generation, and it finally becomes *unthinkable* for the following generations. Influences between generations work through fragmented and broken symbols:

there are no spoken representations of the event, but sensorial, affective and driving representations play an essential role.

According to the unconscious function of secrets and traumas, the existence of which is totally ignored, in third generations may develop affective inconsistent behaviors, problems unsolved in previous generations that are transmitted like psychological inheritance. Therefore, non-elaborated traumas in a generation might lead to the extinction of descendants' heirs with no space to elaborate the mourning (Tisseron 1997).

In Armenian phenomena, the normal mourning process has been disrupted and the extreme situation of the permanent *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* establishes the consequences of the trauma from generation to generation such as unconscious feelings of guilt, repetitions and impulses that lead to reactions like accidents or suicides and psychosomatic and mental disorders.

The descendants of the Armenian Genocide have inherited the *secret* of an unresolved trauma, with strange feelings, emotions and images that cannot be explained from their own psychological life.

The Armenian identity arises like an answer to the survival efforts against the traumatic aspects of the Armenian Genocide; the transmission of their millenary culture aims at preserving Armenian descendants as threatened by the genocidal project.

By means of a relentless mechanism of denial, the dominant Turkish speech of the victimizers has tried to stick the victims to the *incapacity to name* the violence experienced. Only when it is possible to name the crime, the work of mourning can be elaborated, otherwise, the mourning process lasts indefinitely for those unrecognized deaths (Piralian 1994).

Research on the disruption of the generational chain has been raised between the voices of the survivors who *remain silent* and those who *want to talk* (Primo Levi 1986), and two behaviors showing disturbance in the transmission of mourning was found:

a) The need to integrate Armenian history through repetitions on the genocide issue: the desire that the world does not forget the Armenian Genocide.

b) The absence of stories as denial because of the painful trauma: wishing to erase any painful memories.

Work of Mourning: Effects in a Transformational Society.

After the Armenian Genocide, as a consequence of the traumatic effect of the psychological pain due to the extent of the atrocities suffered and reinforced by the denial of the perpetrators, the Armenian survivors had no appropriate reference terms in language to reflect the extreme violence they had gone through.

They had to rebuild their lives and *forget* the horrors of the past so they plunged into a painful silence: *they did not want to talk or simply they just could not*. The first generation could only express their pain behind closed doors, which is the representation of an internal pain: survivors felt excluded, misunderstood and left to the loneliness of their experience, being vulnerable to new traumas. Only as from 1965, was there a turn into remembrance of the Armenian Genocide when changes appeared in the Armenian descendants, who were able to express in public their pain and

commemorate the 50th anniversary with monuments, as the symbolic emblem of Dzizernagabert.

The Armenian descendants received an interruption of the generational chain transmission observed in the following factors:

a) The absence of stories on the genocide and Armenian history issues.

b) The repetition on the genocide and Armenian history issues.

The voices of those survivors and descendants who *remain in silence* and those who *want to talk* (Primo Levi 1986) are signs of consequences of a disturbed mourning transmission.

The *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* which disturbs the mourning process establishes an essential issue to understand the transformational society of Armenia in the psychological sphere.

The difference on the elaboration of mourning in each group of descendants of Armenia and Diaspora must be established as another aspect of this transformational society. For the Armenians of the Diaspora, their psychological pain is linked not only to the trauma of the Genocide, but also to the melancholy and nostalgia of leaving their homeland. The elaboration of trauma of the descendants in Armenia, who had the urge of survival in their own ancestral lands

and who still have to endure the grievance of the continuous deaths like those at Arsaj, contribute to a different transformation in the work of mourning of the collective psyche.

Armenians must be conscious that many transformational events are interconnected to a painful past of each family, linked to things that were kept in silence and that bring psychological symptoms which might come from generations behind.

Therefore, the psychological effects of the *Denial of the Armenian Genocide* are still non-elaborated issues that remain in Armenian society which must be exposed as an important issue to examine in a transformational society.