



“To Brush History Against The Grain”: An essay on unconscious ownership of guilt and identifications¹

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I.

For a 2015 biannual conference in Istanbul I initially planned to present a paper focused on the relationship between history, cultural theory and psychoanalysis, which Walter Benjamin explored in *Theses On the Philosophy of History*.² The main theme of the meeting was ‘Enduring History’, with abundant references to massacres and genocides, and the timing of the event coincided with 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, so I accordingly altered my presentation. Though Benjamin’s world of thought was intimately linked with hideous historical and social situations. Ultimately a victim of Nazism himself, Benjamin's entire career was devoted to examination of the social preconditions and roots of destructive forces, catastrophes and barbarism and to a quest for a *salvation* from them.

In ‘On the Concept of History’, Benjamin dwells on a painting by Paul Klee of an angel of history (thesis IX). As she drifts into the future the angel of history stares back in horror with eyes and mouth agape and wings outstretched. She inexorably is pulled forward as if caught in a stormy whirlpool, and even as the catastrophes mount, the angel’s desire to restore the dead to life and to reassemble the broken pieces is thwarted (Benjamin, 2007). It is a defining image in terms of relating Benjamin’s notions of history and culture to psychoanalysis. Images such as the bathetic angel of history are valuable in stimulating psychoanalytic thought. Hence, I stick to a Benjamin quote as the title; *To Brush History against the Grain!*

Even a scan of the paragraph in which Benjamin's quote (thesis VII)³ appears will show how Benjamin’s thought can have an enriching effect for psychoanalytic reflection,

¹ Translated into English by İdem Erman. I would like to thank the translator, *Free Associations* editors and Aylin Ülkümen for reviewing the translation.

² Istanbul Psychoanalytical Association, *Psychoanalysis in Search of History* meeting, on “Enduring the History”, April 2015, Istanbul. An earlier version of this article was presented at this event and was published in Turkish in the journal *Psikanaliz Yazıları (Psychoanalysis Writings)*, 2016, 33: p. 77-96).

³ “All rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of

especially in the relations between the context of his sweeping sense of history and in the psychoanalytic sense of personal history, and between the stance of the historical materialist and the stance of the psychoanalyst.

II.

Considering the frequency of genocides, massacres and other horrific experiences in Anatolia and the Middle East, the traumatic effects transferred forward from previous generations are almost endless. The *transgenerational transmission of trauma* refers to victims and their *descendants*. However, when it comes to the Armenian Genocide, things seem to get more complicated. Those who suffered genocide were killed and exiled. The descendants of the survivors and the killed mostly settled in other lands. The key issue raised here is the *intergenerational transmission of crime and guilt*, rather than the intergenerational transmissions of trauma and traumas that refers to the victim subjected to genocide. When the Armenian Genocide came to the fore as an issue in Turkey, the questions were: was it genocide or not; was it deportation or genocide; was the genocide an attack or a defense; are we guilty today or not; should we take the blame, apologize and await forgiveness or should we *externalize* the crime and the guilty part of the object and separate ourselves from these unwelcome expectations? The intergenerational transmission of crime, like intergenerational transmission of trauma, abounds with questions, dead ends, diversions and confusions.⁴

One defensive avoidance mechanism is to problematize the reality, scope and conditions of the genocide in a defensive way, and obscure the issue in the vast pile of documents and anecdotes. Another avoidance tactic is to resort to a strict reading of law:

the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.” (Benjamin, 2007, p. 256-257)

⁴ While the conceptualization of the intergenerational transmission of trauma has been discussed and used quite frequently, the intergenerational transmission of guilt, being guilty and criminality is rarely used. Although some authors mentions about the transgenerational transmission of guilt arising from the survival of the victims or from not being able to save their relatives (Troudart, 2012), as far as we know, apart from a few limited references, the direct reference to conceptualization of the intergenerational transmission of guilt or culpability in the psychoanalytic literature is rare (Eickhoff, 1989). However, in fact, besides its direct presence in Freud’s texts (Freud, 1923) as will be mentioned below, this conceptualization stands in a very dominant place as *potentially* in a different context. The primitive tribe, with kill and eat of the primitive father by the community of brothers, the internalization of the prohibition and the intergenerational transmission of crime and guilt (Freud 1913, 1921, 1939). Perhaps the lack of space for intergenerational transmission of crime and culpability, while giving so much space for the intergenerational transmission of trauma, in an indicator of a psychological dynamic difficulty.

In the legal sense, only the person himself and the person can be guilty only because of his own behavior. Even if he is not the perpetrator but participates in the crime, that is, instigates others or aids and abets to commit a crime, it is his own act of instigation or aiding and abetting that makes the person guilty. Legally, one person's crime cannot be the source of another's crime. Crime does not pass horizontally between the members of same generation, nor vertically from one generation to the next. The concept of collective guilt, in which all members of community are blamed for the crimes of some of them is (also) incompatible with the concept of legal crime." (Schlink, 2012, p. 18)

On the centennial anniversary of the Armenian Genocide none of its perpetrators is still alive. Even the children, and many grandchildren, of those responsible are either very old or deceased today. For those who are living, reading these lines and discussing this issue today, the direct connection with *those times* is immensely distant. There is not a single person alive who can be regarded in legal terms as directly responsible, or as supporting, condoning, or not resisting, what transpired in 1915 in Turkey. Time did not heal the wounds but instead simply "*permitted the perpetrators to die*" (Schlink, 2012, quoted from Mitscherlich). For those living today, direct legal responsibility has *dismissed due to being born late*.

III.

If in the context of legal responsibility is somehow *lost* and accusations *dismissed*, the situation is just the opposite in psychoanalysis. In the unconscious nothing is ever lost, dismissed, or expired. The unconscious lies beyond all arguments, denials, judgments, rationalizations, and limitations that go on at the conscious level. What Freud said about the formation of superego in childhood, its intergenerational transmissions and its relation to the problem of crime, supersedes all the discourses of history and law:

Thus a child's superego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents but of its parents' superego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgments of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation. You may easily guess what important assistance taking the superego into account will give us in our understanding of the social behaviour of mankind - in the problem of delinquency, for instance- and perhaps even what practical hints on education. It seems likely that what are known as materialistic views of history sin in underestimating this factor. They brush it aside with the remark that human 'ideologies' are nothing other than the product and superstructure of their contemporary economic conditions. That is true, but very probably not the whole truth. Mankind never lives entirely in the present. The past, the tradition of the race and of the people, lives on in the ideologies of the superego, and yields only slowly to the influences of the present and to new changes; and so long as it operates through the superego it plays a powerful part in human life, independently of economic conditions. (Freud, 1933, p. 66-67)

Since we cannot conceive of the superego (and its transmission) as a separate and detached structure from the whole of experience and of the mind, those living today are the heirs of the superego of past generations, perhaps also (mostly unconsciously) heirs of

psychological dynamics and processes mediated within the harsh framework of the superego. The people in these lands today are, as it were, *infected* with past experiences, whether they acknowledge it or not.

IV.

Alongside the intergenerational unconscious transmission of the superego, Freud in a footnote in *Ego and Id* (1923) underlines the borrowed sense of guilt from previous generations and the unconsciously assuming of guilt. This unconscious assuming may be only a trace of identification (and perhaps a preservation of the libidinal bond) with previous generations and past objects. Let's cite the relevant footnote in its entirety:

The battle with the obstacle of an unconscious sense of guilt is not made easy for the analyst. Nothing can be done against it directly, and nothing indirectly but the slow procedure of unmasking its unconscious repressed roots, and of thus gradually changing it into a *conscious sense* of guilt. One has a special opportunity for influencing it when this *Ucs.* sense of guilt is a 'borrowed' one - when it is the product of an identification with some other person who was once the object of an erotic cathexis. A sense of guilt that has been adopted in this way is often the sole remaining trace of the abandoned love-relation and not at all easy to recognize as such. (The likeness between this process and what happens in melancholia is unmistakable.)

If one can unmask this former object-cathexis behind the *Ucs.* sense of guilt, the therapeutic success is often brilliant, but otherwise the outcome of one's efforts is by no means certain. It depends principally on the intensity of the sense of guilt; there is often no counteracting force of a similar order of strength which the treatment can oppose to it. Perhaps it may depend, too, on whether the personality of the analyst allows of the patient's putting him in the place of his ego ideal, and this involves a temptation for the analyst to play the part of prophet, saviour and redeemer to the patient. Since the rules of analysis are diametrically opposed to the physician's making use of his personality in any such manner, it must be honestly confessed that here we have another limitation to the effectiveness of analysis; after all, analysis does not set out to make pathological reactions impossible, but to give the patient's ego *freedom* to decide one way or the other. (Freud, 1923, p. 49-50)⁵

The context is also important; Freud assesses the role of unconscious guilt in the negative therapeutic response. With the feeling of guilt, every healing is canceled and destroyed by the worsening that follows; getting ill is virtually a necessity. Freud (1923) surmises:

In the end we come to see that we are dealing with what may be called a 'moral' factor, a sense of guilt, which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering. We shall be right in regarding this

⁵ In relation to possible processing of borrowed sense of guilt see also M. Schmideberg (1935) and J. Fernando (2000).

disheartening explanation as final. But as far as the patient is concerned this sense of guilt is dumb; it does not tell him he is guilty; he does not feel guilty, he feels ill. This sense of guilt expresses itself only as a resistance to recovery which it is extremely difficult to overcome. It is also particularly difficult to convince the patient that this motive lies behind his continuing to be ill; he holds fast to the more obvious explanation that treatment by analysis is not the right remedy for his case. (p. 49-50)

Rereading this paragraph by substituting 'Turkish society' for 'patient' would be surely speculative but quite interesting. Considering the inhumane practices historically experienced in these lands, even though their pain is denied, rejected, or not confronted (mute sense of guilt), Turkish society's inability to heal on political, cultural, moral and aesthetic levels may be a consequence. A society that unconsciously *assumed the guilt of previous generations* feels ill, but not consciously guilty; yet resists healing and flourishing, as if a *negative therapeutic response to life and living*.^{6 7}

V.

A childhood memory -which appeared in my mind from time to time without knowing exactly what it was related, and disappeared quickly when it showed its face- reappeared when I was preparing this essay: The image of charred remains of a church in a small Anatolian town where I spent my early youth. Like the remains, the image is ruined, shadowy, as if it were cloaked. Even if I wanted it to, the image wouldn't come to life, but it couldn't be completely erased either. I still can't quite place that church in our town; I can't find if I want to go. It suddenly appears randomly. As in the past, crows fly around it; it appears and disappears. It is not lost; rather it becomes *invisible* and *unrecalled*. No one has entered in it or no one thinks of entering in it, has not even to *look* with an attentive probing eye. It is a sudden encounter with a feeling of strangeness, and townspeople passed by it with an uneasy and uncanny feeling (actually, these feelings do not have a linguistic equivalent). The phantom place comes and goes, appears and disappears like a ghost.

Every province and town -and even many villages and neighborhoods- of Anatolia contain such *monuments*. They were ruined, burned out, but not eradicated.

⁶ Turkish society feels ill, not mostly metaphorically but also concretely; physical illness is in every house, in everywhere, everybody complain about their diseases; everyone talks about corruption of the mental health of the society; that being ill as a society. Freud (1923) also offers us an important clue for overcoming the feeling of being ill due to assumed guilt and the negative therapeutic response to recovery: "*If one can unmask this former object-cathexis behind the Ucs. sense of guilt, the therapeutic success is often brilliant, but otherwise the outcome of one's efforts is by no means certain.*" In today's efforts and attempts to confront crime and guilt, careful and meticulous attention to these (social and historical) *past object cathexises* can be an important determinant in overcoming possible resistances.

⁷ It should be noted that Arca's (2013) mind-opening article focusing on the story of Abel and Cain and focusing on murder and guilt and their possible repercussions is a cautionary start in thinking about the meaning of barrowed sense of guilt in these lands.

They were not preserved, not repaired, and not maintained yet *kept* around like a monument; however not a positive, like a *negative monument!* The negative monument is not a reference place like a positive commemorative monument; nobody meets in front of it, the meaning of the address is not described. The negative monument does not symbolize the town/city, it is not protected by the city, the city does not identify itself (positively) with it; it was not deliberately made, *not built, but somehow made*. It was not accepted into *consciousness* like a positive monument, but *seeped into* it with its invisible presence.

Considering the history of the Armenian Genocide and the massacres in Anatolia, negative monuments may tell us much more than positive monuments; they are more *condensed* spaces and images. Such monuments carry a more *raw* state of power, potency, domination, triumph, victory, and narcissistic grandiosity than positive monuments, as well as the invisible confession of crime and guilt. Its spatial and mental ghostly state is a reflection of the crime and guilt of the previous generations and a repression of the identification of the next generations with this guilt. But it shows its terrifying face again in unexpected times like a “unburied corpse with all its burying rights”! This state of placelessness and unsettledness of negative monuments suspended in time is the spatial concretization of ghostly internal objects, unresolved mourning, unconsciously barrowing of crime and guilt (perhaps also narcissistic pride and satisfaction).⁸

VI.

Freud, in *Fetishism* (1927) offers a parallel between the fetish and the monument. The male child perceives that his mother (the women) does not have a penis, but he refuses to accept this perception that evokes a horror of castration; against this horror, he constructs the mother’s fetish/monument that supersedes penis. It would be interesting to read many monuments as *seeing* castration but also as fetishes that supersede castration and *cancel out* what is seen. Let’s continue the monument-fetish parallelism by transferring it to the positive monument-negative monument distinction.

The positive fetish confirms the fact of having been castrated which it denies just as it supersedes it at the same time. Negative monuments bare the *knowledge* of committing castration, but with its guilt-ridden horror, this knowledge is being pushed back by the neglectful negating of its monumental quality. The positive monument (and fetish) is the affirmative response to narcissistic anxieties of castration, but the negative monument is the negational response mechanism to the horrors of crime and guilt. While the positive monument/fetish is affirmed (erected, grown, remembered, represented...) spatially as well as psychologically, the negative monument/fetish is denied (destroyed, shrunk, forgotten, its representation repressed).

⁸ Here an example of a church is given as a negative monument, however beyond a church other places and structures (cemeteries, hospitals, schools, streets, houses) even books, people, events can be and act as negative monuments. Without going into detail, the closeness of these *monuments* to Benjamin’s world of interest should also be noted.

What Freud said about psychic processes that make the fetish possible can help us to see the negative monuments as indicative, and to understand the psychological processing and handling processes associated with what happened in Turkey through this mediation. Freud continued with *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense* (1938a) and *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1938b), which further broadened the context in *Fetishism* (1927):

Now we come across fetishists who have developed the same fear of castration as non-fetishists and react in the same way to it. Their behaviour is therefore simultaneously expressing two contrary premises. On the one hand they are disavowing the fact of their perception -the fact that they saw no penis in the female genitals; and on the other hand they are recognizing the fact that females have no penis and are drawing the correct conclusions from it. The two attitudes persist side by side throughout their lives without influencing each other. Here is what may rightly be called a splitting of the ego. (...) In fetishists, therefore, the detachment of the ego from the reality of the external world has never succeeded completely. It must not be thought that fetishism presents an exceptional case as regards a splitting of the ego; it is merely a particularly favourable subject for studying the question. (Freud, 1938b, p. 202-203)

The positive fetish relates castration to narcissistic anxieties connected with the threat of reality; the negative fetish/monument relates castration to a guilt (genocide, massacre, murder, plunder) of castrating connected with the superego, spurring a splitting of the ego. The attitude of those who see these negative monuments, and cannot draw the necessary conclusions today isn't dissimilar to Cain, who killed his brother Abel and broke his lineage. Cain answered the question "where is your brother?" (the voice of the superego) as if he had no idea what had happened.

VII.

For a while I collected experiences, situations, places, and events for a dictionary: *Dictionary of what the cannot-be-named*. Certain things were experienced and felt, but had no name, indeed (could) not be named. Perhaps, this namelessness or un-nameability meant that something was far beyond the acceptable and understandable norms. The child who lost his/her mother or father, the person who lost his/her spouse has a *name*; however the person who has lost his/her child does not have a name (in Turkish).

La Boetie in *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, writes that he cannot find an adequate term for the behavior of millions who take no action against a tyrant and instead voluntarily obey. In psychoanalysis Freud found a name for the energy of the life drive, but not for the death drive.⁹ These lands have not (yet) created a name for the horror,

⁹ *Lethe* is suggested as a name for the power the death drive, referring to the mythological underground river whose waters that bring about forgetfulness, see C. Schmidt-Hellerau, 1997. We can also recall Freud's reference to the 'unnamed crime' in *Moses and Monotheism* in this context.

shame, and guilt for genocides and massacres. As if the thoughts that are active unconsciously due to the inner conflicts that this horror, shame, guilt, etc. cannot reach consciousness, cannot obtain a name. The unconsciously assumed crime and guilt is forced to remain unconscious and be repressed; the ruins of destructiveness, modeled by negative monuments, are forced to be denied.

It is as if expectations of the superego and ego-ideal confronted each other as well as within themselves. On the one hand, there arises a sense of (so-called) righteous duty and pride from purging the land of those who “betrayed” it, of protecting the homeland and in risking death for these values. On the other hand, there is an unconscious guilt and shame of having killed the oldest inhabitants of these lands, our neighbors, plundered their properties, and destroyed their churches, schools, and neighborhoods. With the cumulative historical effect of wars, defeats, losses, setbacks and various traumas, narcissistic defenses have intensified; protective and defensive identifications became evident (Lebowitz, 1997). With the idealized omnipotent representations of the motherland, mother language and homeland [Anatolia]¹⁰, the grandiose ‘pervert’ sons (armies and communities) lost the borders.

The superego is torn within a sense of duty; it could not stand against omnipotent limitlessness and it also failed to put *law* and *reality* into effect. Crime and guilt is repressed and reality is denied because of the unbearable shame of weakness and powerlessness as well as of breaking humanity borders. What remains is a problematic relationship with the ‘unnamed/unnameable’ unconscious guilt and its unconscious ‘assumption’ by subsequent generations and its uncertain relation to reality (characterized by the splitting of the ego in the defense process).

VIII.

The direct and indirect effects of the genocide and massacres reverberate at social, cultural, political and economic levels. These traces permeate every aspect of daily life. However, it would be more appropriate to consider this permeation as an encounter, interaction, reconciliation and creation similar to *overdetermination* in dream content, rather than as processes that produce direct and effective results (Freud, 1900). Considered this way, the genocide of Armenians, who were most native of and settled in every city and town of Anatolia, likely inflicted profound wounds on our relations with the other, our neighborhood law, our capacity to resolve contradictions and conflicts creatively (an important component of *overdetermination*) up to the present.¹¹ The unending twists of democratization, and the inability to value coexistence despite all the

¹⁰ The word *Anatolia* includes the word *mother* (ana) and in literally means *full of mother* in Turkish. On the other hand, the origin of the word means *eastern land* in Greek. Undoubtedly, these linguistic roots, transitions and relations of Anatolia word and their semantic contents reflect the social and psychological conflicts (also, their kinship and cultural and social transmission of between nations) of this geography regarding roots and rootedness.

¹¹ The concept of *overdetermination* used by Freud in the context of dreams and symptom formation was borrowed by Althusser in the field of social theory, see L. Althusser, 1962.

‘fraternity’ discourse, the issues that add up and give birth to each other (the Armenian issue; Dersim issue; Kurdish issue; Syrian issue...) are consequences of what happened a century ago, infesting our sociocultural history.¹² Contrary to Freud’s hope (1915) expressed in another context just at the time of the Armenian Genocide, a failure to discover a different way of resolving conflicts (instead of organized violence) combined with a *splitting of ego and denial of reality* instead of confrontation to inflict “blindness to the real problems of society and inability to solve this problems creatively”, which is then inherited by ensuing generations. The sufferings could not be shared, a joint solution unreached, and a reconciliation and, most importantly, a *dream* could not be achieved.

The genocide of peoples who may be the carriers of libertarian ideas and egalitarian social movements cut off a revolutionary potential that could develop in the pursuit of respect for rights, law, justice and truth. Participating in the genocide, profiting from it silently, or at least condoning and ignoring has prepared the ground for the transfer of cynicism, insidiousness, plunder, and submissiveness instead of the values above. Armenian socialist Paramaz (1883-1915), stated in his defense before he was executed, “...we are not working only for the liberation for Armenians, we are working liberation of all humanity, our homeland is the whole world”, and he went on to say as “what sacrifices have we accepted to ensure the fraternity of Armenians and Turks, so what we are encountering now? You forgot that the annihilation of the Armenians means the destruction of whole Turkey”, he seems to have foreseen many things (Akin, 2015, p. 28).

Destruction visits Turkish society in many ways. Take, for example, Turkey after the exile of Armenians who were masters of many professions, especially crafts. The lost artisans could not be found in other Anatolian cities, a tradition of production transmitted from the past, and the values it represents, were erased. It is not only the craftsmen and masters who have been lost but also a style of relating to the object, a certain propriety of contact with the world and human beings lost before it can be transferred to the next generations. One can say that the repair and reparative ability, which is a basic feature of craftsmanship, has also been *broken* and these lands have been left with a legacy of *destruction*, with a limited repair capacity.¹³

Besides the few listed above, *destruction* flows through the mediation of many social, cultural, mental and psychological processes, effects and phenomena that we cannot summarize here. It is permeated as deep currents, like countless thoughts and impulse derivatives that penetrate into a dream, into the content of every single experience that is lived and is being lived. Even considering the relevance of psychoanalysis to this lands, it is not difficult to relate the relative delay of or resistance to the arrival of psychoanalysis (as part of overdetermination) with these currents from the past. It is also possible that the eradication of communities and generations that were

¹² The Armenian Genocide is neither the beginning nor the end of the massacres in Anatolia and Middle East, but it is an important breaking and pivotal moment and a *condensation* point.

¹³ For an essay on the relationship between craftsmanship and psychological functioning, psychoanalysis and the Armenian Genocide, see Özyıldırım İ., 2014.

carriers of revolutionary ideas and practices from the West also played a role in delaying the transmission of psychoanalysis to Turkey.¹⁴

Moreover, a society in which denial of reality is so well established as a defense and which has not handled its internal community relations and relationship with the others creatively, will be wary of psychoanalysis, which needs openness to the truth and the 'other' within itself. The *fetishist* does not need psychoanalysis. A society full of unconscious *assumed guilt* resists the *consciousness of guilt* that psychoanalysis will bring, and reacts negatively to *healing and reparation*. Therefore, psychoanalytic practice, that requires careful, patient, and disciplined craftsmanship in its relation with its 'object', has not found sufficient sensitivity and reciprocity. Unfortunately, the processes necessary for the development of the capacities of 'craftsmanship' and 'openness', which are also effective in the training of psychoanalysts have not been established for decades.

IX.

Freud (1912) writes, "*We were accustomed to think that every latent idea was so because it was weak and that it grew conscious as soon as it became strong. We have now gained the conviction that there are some latent ideas which do not penetrate into consciousness, however strong they may have become.*" (p. 262) That a 'thought' remains unconscious does not mean that it will not be mentally active, and yet not every active thought becomes conscious. Freud (1912) continues: "*We learn therefore by the analysis of neurotic phenomena that a latent or unconscious idea is not necessarily a weak one, and that the presence of such an idea in the mind admits of indirect proofs of the most cogent kind, which are equivalent to the direct proof furnished by consciousness.*" (p. 261)

Reading these passages leads us into thinking about the indirect reverberations of the active psychic force of this unconsciously assumed guilt. As noted, Freud (1923) correlates unconscious guilt with the negative therapeutic response, underlining the role of guilt in the resistance to healing and sticking with illness. Moreover, unconscious guilt creates a pressure to pay a price and be punished (Freud, 1930). By focusing on the myth of Abel and Cain, Arca (2013) underlines the possible reverberations of unconscious guilt in a context that is more universal.

The endless killings in these lands; the multitude of deaths resulting from carelessness and negligence that could have been easily avoided with simple arrangements; the social preferences made in the direction of not entitling oneself to justice, equality and freedom and consequently condemning oneself to impoverished, destitute, 'oppressed' and 'limited' lives; the bankruptcies, which increase with profit and remain obscure in their way of working, with a frequency too high to be seen in other countries, i.e. collapses in the face of (after) success (Freud, 1916); the aesthetic denial that manifests itself in the destruction of the sense of beauty, the destruction of nature and

¹⁴ The first psychoanalytic association in Turkey to be recognized by the IPA, Istanbul Psychoanalytical Association was established in 2001 and was accepted as a component society in 2017.

forests, the concretization and standardization of public spaces etc.; and innumerable exhaustingly and deadly repetitive social, cultural and intellectual phenomena and 'illnesses' can perhaps be interpreted as the indirect reflections of the assumed guilt and resistance to recovery and to get better.¹⁵

Another expression of unconscious guilt, besides paying the price, is being surrounded by demons and revengeful evil spirits. Freud, writes at length in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) of the primitive warrior's psychological experience of killing, and his purification efforts.

Savages are far from being remorseless murderers; when they return victorious from the war-path they may not set foot in their villages or touch their wives till they have atoned for the murders they committed in war by penances which are often long and tedious. It is easy, of course, to attribute this to their superstition: the savage still goes in fear of the avenging spirits of the slain. But the spirits of his slain enemy are nothing but the expression of his bad conscience about his blood-guilt; behind this superstition there lies concealed a vein of ethical sensitiveness which has been lost by us civilized men. (Freud, 1915, p. 294-295)

Even though Freud reproachfully reports that the moral sensibility of primitive man was lost in warring civilized man by 1915, he states that the primitive dwells in our unconscious still. The guilt of satisfaction, mixed with sorrow, will return as evil demons! The constant paranoid discourse expressing that our land (Turkey) is full of traitors and separatists, that we are surrounded by enemies, that there we have no friend in the world, is quite meaningful in this context. Moreover, when we also consider that the victims of the genocide are not enemies or mere foreigners but our centuries-old neighbors, friends, and citizens with whom we are libidinally connected, the remniscences of the victory of the war and the satisfaction of the crimes we forgot are more intensely guilt-laden; therefore our devils are numerous, that much more fearsome and closer.¹⁶

Freud (1916) notes that crimes can be committed because of a sense of guilt with an unknown origin. When this observation about committing crimes is considered together with assumed unconscious guilt (guilt with an unknown origin, based on unconscious identifications with the crimes and guilt of previous generations), we can lead to some remarkable conclusions. Freud (1916) writes:

He was suffering from an oppressive feeling of guilt, of which he did not know the origin, and after he had committed a misdeed this oppression was mitigated. His sense of guilt was at least attached to something." (p. 331-332)

Freud added that,

¹⁵ Such interpretations inevitably carry the risk of "psychologizing" sociocultural experiences. It should be noted that our aim is not to exclude the possible social, political, economic, and historical factors and not to reduce the decisiveness to psychological factors to explain the mentioned conditions. However, it should not be overlooked that many determinants play a role in social formations and one of them is various psychological processes arising from the psychic experiences.

¹⁶ L. Grinberg (1964) talks about persecutor and depressive guilt. It would be interesting to elaborate and discuss what happened in these lands and their aftermath by considering unconscious crime and guilt within the framework of these concept.

. . .paradoxical as it may sound, I must maintain that the sense of guilt was present before the misdeed, that it did not arise from it, but conversely the misdeed arose from the sense of guilt. These people might justly be described as criminals from a sense of guilt. The pre-existence of the guilty feeling had of course been demonstrated by a whole set of other manifestations and effects. (p. 331-332)

Now maybe we can think about what Freud said about individual crime, in the context of genocide, assumed guilt and Turkish society. In this context, the assumed unconscious crime and guilt, which comes beyond the generations and from an unknown origin, pushes the person/society to crime; thus perhaps the crime is repeated and guilt sustains itself.

X.

Guilt is remedied through the stages of remorse and apology, by forgiveness and redemption (Cheron and Levinas, 2015). Also behind the repentance unconscious processes play a role. If remorse has not yet appeared, it is impossible to pass through other stages and be purified. It seems that when it comes especially to assumed unconscious crime and guilt, these processes becomes more complex; the consciousness of guilt is repressed by investment in the preservation of past object bonds, the pressures of the ego-ideal and the joint operation of various (impulsive) gratifications. The psychic work that can turn unconscious guilt into remorse is disrupted, and the *hysterical recollection* cannot evolve into *analytical recollection*. When consciousness of guilt, remorse, apology and be forgiven processes are blocked, the efforts to be repaired and repair cannot put into; instead, the repetitive unconscious need for self-destruction and be punished, and need to pay a price operates, which passed down from generation to generation.

It should not be forgotten that these processes are always dynamic and open to differentiation with the involvement of different potentials. One possible potential is our ties (however ambivalent) with the victims of the massacres. In the matter of assumed guilt, Freud seems rather to point to our past ties to guilt-laden objects; but in many other writings he also places more prominent importance on our ties with the victims exposed to the guilt. Even though the people who were massacred and killed in these lands were coded (once upon a time) as foreigner, and perhaps enemy, they are our century-old neighbors, friends, relatives and fellow citizens. Hence, as Freud (1915) said, above all, *each one is part of our beloved selves!* And let's not forget that *killing* and *eating* are parallel in our unconscious and, one identifies with the person who was killed and eaten, whether it is a father or a sibling; "...the cannibalistic act as an attempt to ensure identification with him by incorporating a piece of him." (Freud, 1939, p. 82)¹⁷

¹⁷ With the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, his "lineage was broken down". O. Arca (2013), based on religious and mythological sources, states that Abel was eaten by Cain after he was killed. Considering that eating involves identification, then there is an internalized (but repressed) Abel in Cain and his descendants.

Perhaps it is these repressed identifications that are remembered while we shout “we are all Armenians!”¹⁸ Finding analytical ways of remembering (and sensing) these identifications and ties lead us to *a different kind of guilt* (depressive rather than persecutory), which will restructure our sociocultural world, especially our morality and laws.¹⁹ *Such a remembering* will be able to make room again within us and in our psychological world for the Armenian craftsman who carrying out his work with care and cooperation:

“...a small boy has done nothing but chop bits of wood to pieces, he will now begin to try and make those bits of wood into a pencil. He will take pieces of lead got from pencils he has cut up, and put them in a crack in the wood, and then sew a piece of stuff round the rough wood to make it look nicer.” (Klein, 1933, p. 274).

The ghostly potential of negative monuments will be remembered, perhaps repaired, and the lost will find their place. Thus, phantasies of castration will be transcended.²⁰ With potentials that can be realized when the repression of Abel within us is resolved through analytical recollection, the intergenerational transmission of goodness and healing will be possible, apart from the transmission of trauma, crime and guilt.

¹⁸ This slogan (we are all Armenians), which was shouted out at commemorative demonstrations, caused much controversy in leftist groups and in Turkish society, and apparently points to deeper psychological meanings beyond its manifest content. The ‘recognition’ of Armenian Genocide by leftists of Turkey may be related to the endless massacres of leftists in these lands, which became particularly evident with the 1980 military coup; the leftist movement has only *remembered* being an Armenian and the Armenian within it in the last decades. It would take a little longer to remember Paramaz.

¹⁹ It can be referred to our another article which tries to make a possible distinction between *superego* and *conscience* by using the various inner potentials of the psychoanalytic theory as mentioned here (Özyıldırım İ., 2016).

²⁰ This analytic recollection quite evokes the Benjaminian approach, which, with transfer of Zizek, intellectualizes history as the remembrance of ruined desires and utopias which could not reach to its end beyond a series of events, through images and objects.

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