

Talk given as one of a panel of papers entitled ‘The Social Unconscious and the Foundation Matrix’. The author is giving her perception of current Israeli society.

By Hanni Biran

Israeli Society is experiencing a severe split these days, and it is difficult to find links between its poles. Under the auspices of the social nets of the internet (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) a culture of verbal violence and brutal attacks, on anybody expressing a moderate opinion about the Palestinians, is spread all over the country. Posts are filled with curses, foul-language and warnings against those who speak against the occupation. Protesters against the occupation get violently attacked and beaten up by the extreme rightists who are silently or less so by the majority of the people. Most of the Israelis are a large and strong mob and the rest is a thin layer of pro-peace and war-haters.

How can we understand such a bitter polarity within the Israeli Society, at these difficult times? What are the unconscious processes that bring such a wide split and the deterioration of speech culture?

I would like to suggest a working hypothesis: Emotions are going crazy because of the lack of a moderating and containing leadership. There is no leadership that is rejecting and fighting violence inside the Israeli society and negotiates peace talks that is also generous to the Palestinians, talks that would show the light at the end of the tunnel. A hypothesis resulting from that first one: Our leadership has no trust in peace and therefore there is no moderation of the Jewish People’s anxiety. The Jewish people suffered a huge trauma of The Holocaust and has registered a danger of extinction. Now this People is living on the verge of an upcoming catastrophe and the paranoia is so strong, it overcomes the trust in peace.

A group analyst, as any other citizen, has a political opinion but he is not expected to work from within it but has to work from the ethical stance, an ethic that protects human rights and human dignity.

As group analysts we should be very modest concerning our abilities to influence unconscious processes in society at large. In the chaotic state we experience it is important to keep our emotional way of speaking and our role as containers for our patients’ unbearable

anxiety. Our duty is to enable people to talk about their stress rather than expressing it with violence or anxiety attacks.

While Tami El'ad and I were conducting a Large Group of Educational Psychologists, in the center of Tel-Aviv, there was a rocket alarm and all of us, 60 people, hurried to the shelter. We saw how the alarm intercepted the emotional dialogue. That brought us the understanding that at time of peril all thinking stops and all speech is blocked. A moment like this is real but also metaphorical in its relation to society at large. In time of danger the society seldom thinks.

The picture is so complex. When one sees the buildings in Gaza demolished to the foundations, when one sees the violent death of people, entire families; men, women and children, one feels the urge to stand up and scream at the government and the Chief of Staff to stop the insanity. But, is this the whole picture? Not really.

Together with the wish for my government and the IDF to be more careful about human lives and human rights in Gaza, of the innocent and the uninvolved, there is the Hamas and his deliberate strategy to involve civilians, and not only on the Israeli side, as a fighting strategy, either as TARGETS – all the Hamas rockets and offensive tunnels are aimed at civilian places, or as deliberate casualties that will win them political points – by using the Gaza civilians, adults and children alike, as human shield, by shooting the rockets from the city centers and public institutions, hiding tunnels entrances in civilian houses and the tunnels themselves under the whole civilian area, and using hospitals and UN facilities as headquarters and fighting hideouts.

The Hamas is a bitter enemy engaged in a Jihad war. Their aim is to eliminate Israel, and then the rest of the western culture, even in all those countries in Europe that support it and attack Israel politically, because the Hamas is a part of the international Jihadistic Islam and is not different than Al-Kaida, Boku-Haram, The *radical Islamic State of Iraq* and Syria (ISIS), etc.

There is a need to condemn the Israeli occupation and strive to end it. These almost 50 years of rule over the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza also put the political Left Wing into a terrible psychological occupation. I'm going to an international conference in Lisbon and know that unwillingly I represent the terrible images of the destroyed city of Gaza and over a thousand dead and thousands of injured civilians. I know that the image of Israel in the world is demonic and considering the images from Gaza this is not something to be surprised about.

Nevertheless, in the same way my government is making me an unwilling aggressor there is the Hamas that occupied the rule in Gaza by force, and by killing a lot of the PLO (PATAACH) representatives in Gaza, Palestinians themselves, and occupied the will of the Gaza civilians by fooling them as if their war is a war of liberation (when it is actually a Jihad war against everything that is western). The Gaza civilians support the Hamas because they think it is a war of liberation, and they are willing to sacrifice anything and everything to stop the occupation.

The question that can still be asked is: Can we achieve freedom and Peace for our people in peaceful ways? Many elements in both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, contribute to the difficulty of transforming aggression into dialogue. The Hamas and a large part of the Palestinian people have to replace their Death Culture (JIHAD) with a Life desiring culture, and our government should express more generosity towards the Palestinians, who have been suffering the lack of freedom for so long, much more than the 47 years they are under the Israeli rule.

I think that if we, Israeli Group Analysts, will say that our government is all bad and wrong and the Palestinians are all good and right, we would be very far from the truth, we'd be living in a world of black & white, aggressor and victim, persecutor and persecuted angel and devil. The world is not built this way. The solution would come when both sides will try to see the whole, when they will acknowledge each other's sufferings, when they will be ready for concessions, when there will be a connection through the experience of belonging to the Middle East, rather than one of possessing people and their land.

This is a citation from an article from the famous Israeli author David Grossman:

“The Israeli despair has a strange component of a kind of ‘joy towards disaster’, or at least joy towards disappointment: kind of gloating for those whose hope for peace has failed. This is an especially crooked happiness, since it is gloating to ourselves: It sometimes seems that in the heart of the Israeli an insult is boiling for the fact that in 1993, when the Oslo agreements were signed, he dared to believe – not just in the enemy that for a moment became a partner, but in general, in the possibility of goodness, that sometime it may be good. In this region, that we may ever experience ‘good’ here”.

With these harsh words Grossman is actually talking about strong feelings that reside inside the Social Unconscious.

I want to add and balance this hard statement by saying that the Hamas in Gaza does not believe in goodness either and suffers, too, from the terrible social disease “Joy towards Disaster”.

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