

Scattered thoughts on trauma and memory*

Paolo Giuganino**

Abstract. This paper examines, from a personal and clinician's perspective, the interrelation between trauma and memory. The author recalls his autobiographical memories and experiences on this two concepts by linking them to other authors thoughts. On the theme of trauma, the author underlines how the Holocaust- Shoah has been the trauma *par excellence* of the twentieth century by quoting several writing starting from Rudolf Höss's *memoirs*, Nazi lieutenant colonel of Auschwitz, to the same book's foreword written by Primo Levi, as well as many other authors such as Vasilij Grossman and Amos Oz. The author stresses the distortion of German language operated by Nazism and highlights the role played by the occult, mythological and mystical traditions in structuring the Third Reich, particularly in the SS organization system and pursuit for a pure "Aryan race". Moreover, the author highlights how Ferenczi's contributions added to the developments of the concept of trauma through Luis Martin-Cabré exploration and detailed study of the author's psychoanalytic thought.

Keywords: Trauma, memory, testimony, Holocaust, Shoah, survivors, state violence, forgiveness, Höss, Primo Levi, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Vasilij Grossman, Amos Oz, Ferenczi, Freud, Luis-Martin Cabré.

In memory of Gino Giuganino (1913-1949).
A mountaineer and partisan from Turin.
A righteous of the Italian Jewish community
and honoured with a gold medal for having
helped many victims of persecution to cross over
into Switzerland saving them from certain death.

To the Stuck N. 174517, i.e. Primo Levi
To: «Paola Pakitz / Cantante de Operetta / Fja de Arone / De el ghetto de Cracovia / Fatta savon /
Per ordine del Fuhrer / Morta a Mauthausen» (Carolus L. Cergoly)

«Evil becomes banal when the motives of those involved in carrying it out become superfluous»
(Hannah Arendt)

«The only person who is truly cowardly is he who is afraid of his own memories» (Elias Canetti)

«I did what I could» (Epitaph on Willy Brandt's tombstone)

«Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption»
(Israel Ben Eliezer, also known as the Baal Shem Tov)

Premise. For a really long time, I confronted myself with the intention of writing about a topic that I had always been passionate and distressed about. I am referring to *Trauma* and its connection with *Memory*. I finally decided to commence after participating to the "Commemorative Days on Primo Levi" in Rome three years ago. This event was well organized by my dear friend David Meghnagi whom I am thankful for the implicit support he has given me throughout this initiative.

Then I must apologize to him for this series of "free associations" more or less "monitored" that I will explain further on, hoping that the reader will want to consider this work as a result of a commitment which is not only cultural but also existential and political.

This work originates in part from autobiographical experiences and in large part from the attempt to "fix" the feeling of confusion that one feels while facing so much pain and *Thanatos*, often realized through "scientific" ways.

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Gino

Referring to the dedicatee of this paper, I wish to point out that my uncle Victor, father of Gino, took over the oldest candle factory in Turin (“*Premiata Cereria Luigi Conterno Torino 1795*”) that ensured for his family a dignified life. Gino, both during and after high school, was very athletic and he practiced sports like football, mountain climbing, both summer and winter skiing, gaining a full knowledge of the routes and paths along the border. His concern for the weak, the persecuted and the needy was originally part of an ethical and religious background, but essentially secular, shared both by my uncle and my father who was a good friend, among others, of Giacomo Matteotti and Giovanni Amendola, with whom he co-worked at the newspaper *Il mondo* founded by the latter, until its forced closure in 1926 by the fascist regime. Gino participated in the Italian Resistance: in his home in Turin, there was a two-way radio and at the entrance a large photo of him with the blackshirt (the “*camicia nera*” worn by those who were part of the “*Gioventù Universitaria Fascista*”, University Fascist Youth Movement) close to Mussolini and others hierarchs! This dissuaded a fascist patrol from inspection and any search of his apartment!

Within this framework, his mission took place (see the dedication to my work), about which at that time we, from Rome, knew very little for obvious safety reasons. Despite our different ages and cities, Gino always showed me his genuine and sincere affection which was for me very fulfilling. Unfortunately in 1947, he was struck by a severe form of thromboangiitis obliterans (Buerger's disease) facilitated probably by the many hours he spent in the snow and two years later, when he was only 36 years old, this disease brought him to a painful death, blind with a leg amputated. Just before he died he also suffered for the tragic loss of his favourite football team of Turin (Grande Torino) of which he knew well many players, such as Valentino Mazzola! At that time, football was very different from now. The team was on board when due to the lack of visibility the plane crashed against the Hill of Superga.

In 1955, the Jewish community of the Piemonte region offered to the mother of Gino, a gold medal which later she gave to me. On one side there is the representation of the Menorah with the Tablets of the Law with the inscription which says “The Jews of Italy in grateful memory of Gino Giuganino 1945-1955” and on the other side there is a male figure with his arms wide and in the background there is the sea with two sailing ships.

Scattered thoughts

Referring to the title of this paper, I used the word “scattered” to outline the difficulty that may occur when connecting with significant links the two nouns: *trauma and memory*. After many decades of thinking and theorizing on *trauma* and *memory* by the different schools of thought, not only by the psychoanalytic one, it is now known that there is an unquestionable close relationship between these two fields and their psychic interaction.

I will try to examine *trauma* and *memory* keeping in mind that I have experienced them in the first place during particular moments. Firstly in both my childhood and early youth when I had to face personal and historical traumatizing events such as war (Spain, Ethiopia and Second World War). Secondly, when I have faced a traumatic endopsychic and interpersonal conflict attributable to the transition from an initial Jungian training to a Freudian one. For the moment, I would prefer speaking of *Long-term memory* mentioning the biographical, declarative (or explicit) memory to later on face the procedural (or implicit) one and its unconscious organization.

Considering the term “*thoughts*” we could ask ourselves what the relationship between thought and language is about (see, among others, Vygotskij, Piaget, Sapir & Whorf, Chomsky) and whether there are any links between these two psychic activities which are not only part of human nature: look at the essential researches on the molecular biology of memory (Kandel, Nobel Prize).

Another question is whether, and how, from Freud's Clinical Case Stories (Awarded 1930 Goethe Prize for the German language), transforming language into narrative has become "scientific", "therapeutic", or otherwise "mystifying" (see Abraham and Torok, Todorov, Landa, Giuganino 1994, etc.). Concerning these questions, see also David Meghnagi's work (2011) full of suggestive proposals for future development on this topic, as the result of his passionate sincerity and thoughtful expertise.

Son of the She-wolf, Joseph Conrad, Francesco Valagussa, Gerhard Domagk, Rosy Etlinger Montalcini, Pesach in Montefalco

In one of my earliest memories I see myself wearing headphones, which are connected to a "crystal radio", and fascinated listening to the music of a certain "Tiboe" (Beethoven). This event affected the beginning of my deep engagement with music, in its various forms such as solo, orchestral, for theatre and for chamber. Since that day, music became vital to my existence.

Then, in early childhood, I remember wearing the "uniform" and on my chest I see a big white cloth crossed folded with a metallic "m" (*mussolini*) written in italics on the buckle. I was then a "Son of the She-wolf" (*Figlio della Lupa*). I wondered why I had "*to serve with all my strength and if necessary my blood the cause of the Fascist Revolution*", as it was written on the back cover of the membership card given to me. These were words I couldn't even spell easily but constituted one of my first readings. I remember the astonishment regarding the unclear reason behind the use of blood to defend "something" which was meaningless for me.

Fortunately then followed, little by little, almost the totality of tales written by Jules Verne. These writings dated back to the first Italian edition (of the nineteenth-century). I still keep them besides other authors' such as Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Wallace, Emilio Salgari, Jack London and later on Joseph Conrad who I preferred more to the inevitable Marcel Proust. Joseph Conrad still fascinated me with its beautiful English (Nobel Prize !) learned as a third language in his youth. I mean his "four-dimensional" descriptions that I will never tire of rereading. I shall just recall "Heart of darkness" and the story entitled "The end of the tether".

Another memory of my childhood which may at least partially explain my involvement with the story of the Jews, dates back to when, at eight years of age, I had a severe Septicemia syndrome due to "viridans streptococci" with various complications: in addition to an otitis I had an hemorrhagic nephritis with anuria. I remember that I was massaged regularly with hot oil and covered by wool blankets to avoid as far as possible by sweating the non diuresis.

My mother and father lived a deep conflict and were getting separated, however this decision probably had been postponed due to my critical health conditions. I remember that several relatives came to visit me and told me that I was soon going to encounter Jesus surrounded by angels.

In the house where we lived and where I was born, on the lower floor lived Camillo Montalcini, an important senior official of the Chamber of Deputies, retired. His wife, Rosy Etlinger, a Swiss-born Jew, was concerned about me and my fate with much affection and I remember waiting Mrs. Rosy, who appeared regularly with a "jello" dish prepared for me that was one of the few things I was allowed to eat in addition to mozzarella and little else. This dear person had early signs of Parkinson's disease and I remember a certain trembling of her hands that was transmitted to the "jello" even though I couldn't, at that time, catch the comic aspect of this scene.

I remember Francesco Valagussa, one of the best pediatricians, "Doctor of the Royal House" who proposed a new therapy with a recently available drug called "red Prontosil" that Gerhard Domagk had developed in Kiel the year before and for which he won the Nobel Prize a few years later. The Nazis forbade him to accept this prize and he was finally able to collect it only eleven years later when the war ended.

At the end I recovered and I remember that for a while I continued to make red colored urine, not due to blood, but to the coloured group azo-sulfonamide which was later corrected in "white."

A couple of years later we were invited to an Easter lunch (“Pesach”) in the country house that the Montalcini in Montefalco in Umbria. I remember the peaceful atmosphere and coexistence of these worthy people around a table spread with food and simply but ritually decorated with olive branches and how warmly we were welcomed.

Probably I owe my life to a German scientist and a loving Jewish Lady!

Archibald J. Cronin, Paul De Kruif, Frank Thiess, Pasquale Vannucci (Dante and Leopardi)

I still remember with gratitude Sir Archibald Joseph Cronin, a physician who initially worked with miners in a town in South Wales. This author is too often forgotten and in some ways I consider him as a late epigone of Victor Hugo, another idol of my first readings. Sir Archibald Joseph Cronin like Hugo, contributed to my transition from childhood to adolescence, opening my mind to a world that did not experience the tragedy of war but struggled into the unresolved conflict between labor and capital, masterfully described in Cronin’s novel *The Stars Look Down*. Later on, it came to my mind, unintentionally, one of Kant’s aphorism, engraved on his tombstone, which says: “*the starry sky above me and the moral law within me*”. This was experienced by the characters of this unforgettable story who lived their “moral law” in the “Neptune” mine tunnels from which they would rise to the surface, once they didn’t get killed, in order to “*watch the stars again*” and from which I recall the touching solidarity between father and son facing death.

I also remember *The Citadel* novel that helped me choose the Faculty of Medicine. Choice that was also influenced by the reading of *Microbe Hunters* and *Men against Death*, written by Paul De Kruif. More-over I still remember Cronin’s novels such as *The Hatter's castle*, *Grand Canary*, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, *Green Years*.

It has been therefore a pleasant surprise for me to read Antonio D' Orrico’s *Cameo* (*Sette*, a weekly magazine of the Newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, November 17th 2011). The article was part of its “survey” about *The book that has struck you at 14 years old (or so)*. The journalist pointed out (in *Strucked at 14 years old by Cronin’s novels*) the enthusiasm of young female readers which he associated without any retention (“I do not know other authors more enlightening than him”).

Another author who influenced me during the transition from childhood to adolescence was the Latvian writer of German language Frank Thiess with his *Tsushima* (1936), translated in English (1937) as “The voyage of the forgotten men”. I was struck by the unforgettable description of the preposterous voyage lasted several months from Pietroburg, heaped with cheerful crowd, to Japan, just to be defeated in front of the city of Tsushima. The Russian fleet was obliged to circumnavigate Africa because was forbidden to cross the Suez Canal. I was deeply moved by the description of the encounter in the Japanese war hospital between the winner, the Admiral Heihachiro Togo and the defeated, The Admiral Zinovy Petrovich Rozhstvensky, who was rescued severely wounded, against his will before his warship sunk. His return to Russia by transiberian railway welcomed by the love of all the people waiting the passage of the train. Nevertheless he was subjected to a slanderous process and died three years later, 60 years old.

It would be a lack of gratitude if I didn't mention Professor Pasquale Vannucci: He has been a significant person during my adolescence as he seemed to be different from the other professors in my high school. He would follow his own beliefs and shine by his own light even if all his colleagues followed the same school policies which at the time had plenty control of everything. He was a priest and a very demanding rigorous Italian professor who helped me understand many authors that still inspire my life. He taught me how to love the Italian language: besides Dante (in every lesson he used to read part of the Divine Comedy Cantos which he then summarized to us). I remember above all the greatest Italian modern poet Giacomo Leopardi commented by “padre” Vannucci with restrained emotion. Years later I visited Recanati and lived an “olotimic” experience although quite different from the one that I'll describe at the end of these lines.

Aldous Huxley

It is later that the American contribution arrived (see Faulkner, Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Hemingway, etc.). This new enrichment did not renew that cognitive emotional “struck” I had by reading Cronin’s novels and which was later integrated among others, such as Aldous Huxley with his unmistakable irony and passionate skepticism of his novels and short stories. One of them took place in an “anglicised” almost archetypal Florence (*Time must have a stop*). I also remember from the same author *Ends and Means* that helped me to transform in Italian an ethic which was secular and more bearable. In fact, I found it more “ego-syntonic” from the usual ones such as the Machiavelli’s belief “the end justifies the means” and the religious motto “AMDG *ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*” (for the greater glory of God).

One should recall that the latter ethic brought people to accept the humiliation of Galilei and moreover did not hesitate to declare, among others, Giordano Bruno, Girolamo Savonarola as heretics and had to be burned at the stake, in order to save their soul and preventing the Heresy to contaminate the Doctrine.

I also remember of Huxley *The perennial philosophy* which helped me to quit the program of study I began at the Gregorian University of Rome at the same time of the Faculty of Medicine and the prophetic *Brave new world* followed by the *Brave new world revisited*.

Lin Yutang

Another author who helped me transform dogmatism and vacuous stereotypes of the Catholic education in a better smiling and wise vision of life on this earth was without a shadow of doubt Lin Yutang. He was born in 1895 to a family mission. Raised as a zealous Christian, he later described himself as having become “happily pagan”. This author was dear to me since my early youth as he combined to his deep understanding of Chinese culture and literature, Anglo-saxon culture due to his academic career abroad and for having lived mainly in the United States, in addition to his mastery of the English language that made him fully bilingual.

Among all his works, I would like to point out, as well as *My country and my people* (1936), the bestseller *The importance of living* (1937) what the author called “*a lyrical philosophy*”. I have read the beautiful Italian translation made by Piero Jahier (*Importanza di vivere*), one of the first Italian translator who defined himself as “*decanting honey which has already been decanted once.*”

This book was a bestseller when it was first published in 1937, and has been a classic for over seventy years. It is an invitation to savour life’s beauty, its endless fascination, and its slow, sure, simple pleasures. In an era when we are overwhelmed with wake-up calls, this wise and timeless book is more relevant than ever before.

Lin Yutang quotes, in the paragraph called “*The Chinese Family Ideal*”, a poem written by the female painter Kuan Tao-Sheng, wife of the great Yuan (1280-1368) painter Chao Mengfu. Madame Kuan was herself a painter and teacher at the Imperial Court. When Chao, middle aged, was thinking of taking a mistress, Madame Kuan wrote the following poem, which touched his heart and changed his mind:

«Twixt you and me
There's too much emotion!
That's the reason why
There's such a commotion!
Take a lump of clay,
wet it, pat it,
And make an image of me,
And an image of you.
Then smash them, crash them,
And add a little water.

Break them and re-make them
 Into an image of you,
 And an image of me.
 Then in my clay, there's a little of you.
 And in your clay, there's a little of me.
 And nothing ever shall sever us;
 Living, we'll sleep in the same quilt,
 And dead, we'll be buried together» (Lin Yutang, 1937).

I remember these lines of poetry - contemporary of Dante and Marco Polo! - when I reflect upon the term “*fusionality*” currently used with a depreciative connotation apart from its proper use in psychopathology. In this age of exaggerated narcissism, more and more of death than of life (I’m referring here to André Green) the term fusion is often confused or replaced with the term “*symbiotic*” in its various features (mutualistic, parasitic, etc.), and appears to contain a irretrievable meaning of fragility and weakness.

The importance of stability, security, being loved for who you are, of belonging to each other in a constant mutual exchange, appear in the verses of this poem as an example of “*Fusion*” by which, in my opinion, no “new paradigm” may be a viable alternative.

Lin Yutang commenting on this poem with his inimitable deep and light spirit says: “*I rather think the Genesis story of the Creation needs to be rewritten all over the again....God...took some water, and with the water He molded the clay (Adam), and this water which entered into Adam's being was called Eve, and only in having Eve in his being was Adam's life complete*”.

In music, among other, I remember a wonderful *Lied* by Johann Sebastian Bach (the only *Lied* he has written): “*Bist du bei mir*”(“*If you are with me*”), *Be Thou with me, then I will go gladly unto [my] death and to my rest. Ah, what a pleasant end for me, if your dear hands be the last I see, closing shut my faithful eyes to rest!*”).

I still remember, Lin Yutang’s quote of the “*philosophy of the half-and-half*” taught in the fifth century by Confucius' grandson, Tse'sse, author of *The Golden Mean*.

The definition of “anachronistic” does not reduce the value of this possible existential experience, especially nowadays when for many of us it is essential to be first, not only in sports competitions (such as skiing or Formula 1) for which achievements measured to the hundredth of a second.

This is the ideal so well expressed in Li Mi-an's 'The Half-and-Half Song':

«By far the greater half have I seen through
 This floating life - Ah, there's a magic word -
 This 'half' - so rich in implications.
 It bids us taste the joy of more than we
 Can ever own. Halfway in life is man's
 Best state, when slackened pace allows him ease;
 A wide world lies halfway 'twixt heaven and earth;
 To live halfway between the town and land,
 Have farms halfway between the streams and hills;
 Be half-a-scholar, and half-a-squire, and half
 In business; half as gentry live,
 And half related to the common folk;
 And have a house that's half genteel, half plain,
 Half elegantly furnished and half bare;
 Dresses and gowns that are half old, half new,
 And food half epicure's, half simple fare;
 Have servants not too clever, not too dull;
 A wife who's not too simple, nor too smart -
 So then, at heart, I feel I'm half a Buddha,
 And almost half a Taoist fairy blest.
 One half myself to Father Heaven I

Return; the other half to children leave -
 Half thinking how for my posterity
 To plan and provide, and yet half minding how
 To answer God when the body's laid at rest.
 He is most wisely drunk who is half drunk
 And flowers in half-bloom look their prettiest;
 As boats at half-sail sail the steadiest,
 And horses held at half-slack reins trot best.
 Who half too much has, adds anxiety,
 But half too little, adds possession's zest.
 Since life's of sweet and bitter compounded,
 Who tastes but half is wise and cleverest» (Li Mi-an in Lin Yutang, 1937).

Silvano Arieti, David Meghnagi, Giuseppe Pardo Roques

During my youth explorations of English literature, I came across John Donne (Meditation XVII- Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, 1624) perhaps supported by a beautiful Ingrid Bergman, little more than a teenager at that time, in the movie *For whom the Bell Tolls*.

I often used these words as a validation of certain stereotypes that I was almost forced to practice as being part of a Catholic culture and education. Therefore for a long time I could neither refuse nor feel them as really mine. Who helped me overcome this ambiguity was a person who had the fortune to meet and whom I always remember with deep respect and affection. I'm talking about Silvano Arieti editor and coordinator of the *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, in which he gathered more than 100 contributors. In the third volume he introduces Donald Ross, a psychiatrist and professor in Cincinnati which concludes the chapter on "*Neuroses Following trauma and their relation to compensation*" as follows: "... and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Moreover the same volume ends with the excellent work of Silvano Arieti *Creativity and its cultivation: relation to psychopathology and mental health* that I have read repeatedly over the years, from which I always draw enrichment.

The separation from his native Pisa imposed by the racial laws has been certainly traumatic for Arieti and the consequent migration to the United States which became soon his new home.

The work subsequently carried out by him and the affirmation of its scientific skills and human resources as well as the ability to work even collectively (see the fundamental *Handbook of Psychiatry* in three volumes, already mentioned, of which Arieti was the Chief-Editor) is a shining witness of the creative dimension of reparation that may follow trauma. (Arieti, 1976). I recall that in a confidential conversation he said that almost every night he dreamed of Pisa, the people, the events related to this hometown where he lived his childhood and youth until his brilliant medical degree.

Very important for Silvano Arieti was the relationship he had with Giuseppe Pardo Roques who was the Parnas (Lay leader) of the Jewish Community of Pisa and forty years older. Pardo Roques was very intelligent, very valuable, generous with both Jews and Christians, and who was murdered with the whole family and some Christians guests by the Nazis, in his house in Pisa that he could not leave because afflicted by a serious obsessional neurosis with delusion of persecution. Arieti, two years before his death, writes about this event and his first part of life in Pisa in a small book *The Parnas: A Scene from the Holocaust* (Arieti, 1979) full of emotions, mostly lived in his youth and in direct contact with the Parnas.

I quote here the lines with which he concludes the introduction of his book:

«I have asked myself why I waited so long before writing this story. Why did I let long stretches of time pass during which I refused to think about this subject, so that several times I had to reattune myself to a story I knew so well? Whatever the answer, each time my mind and heart went back to the episodes narrated in this book, I saw new possibilities for meaning, and the hope was renewed that the day would come when I could share my understanding with others. That day has now come. It is now my duty to tell the story as I have

come to see it. It is my sacred duty to do what I can so that the story and its characters will be remembered, and so that its meaning can be pondered. I feel as if I had written this book not only with ink but also with blood. On page after page I could not evade the claims being made on my soul. It was not easy to return this way to a time that I might have been caught in but avoided, and that I now have to live over and over again. It was not easy to collect tears that I neither shed nor saw in others but that still burn in my eyes. I hope this short book will also show that tragic times have a perfume of their own, and smiles of hope, and traces of charm, and offer olive branches and late warnings that may not be too late» (S. Arieti, 1979).

David Meghnagi's work (2012) has been inspired by Arieti's book assuming the possible precognitive implications in symptoms presented by the main character and makes a captivating confrontation with the latest Freud (1939), quoting one of the three essays on Moses (Freud, 1934-1938).

Still Meghnagi, perhaps in the wake of the story written by Silvano Arieti, deals with the horrors brought by the survivors of the Holocaust and the theme of the collective grieving process through the narration of the fascinating story of four people's life, who should represent all those who came face to face with the absolute evil (Meghnagi, 2005). I also remember Meghnagi's relentless work of counseling for many refugees, especially those coming from Libya, and as a lecturer at the University of Roma Tre, hosting both groups and seminars. During one of these seminars ("*From the dunes to Piazza Bologna*") Meghnagi asked himself: "Escaping from a country, having to start again, for whom is more difficult? For a defeated father who needs protection or for his children who therefore need to assume this task? Who suffered and who did not?"

Misuse of German language by Nazis. Amos Oz and fanaticism. Bach's "mit neuem Atem", Jorge Corrente, Followers of Thoth

While I have always been familiar with both English and French that I loved and cultivated since childhood, I was never able to overcome the difficulties with learning German. The block/inhibition I felt and still feel about this, at least in part, comes from the use of this language as a mediator and executor of the Nazi infamy, from the first edition of *Mein Kampf* (Hitler, 1925), to the speeches of Goebbels, the propaganda wall posters (*Befehl*) and the linked hangings, etc. etc.

But the same language was used by Rilke (*The Duino Elegies*, 1923) and by Schubert in his music (*The Winterreise*, 1828), and used by a minor writer Hans Carossa, an originally Italian physician very dear to me who wrote "*Es gibt kein Ende...*" used in Bach's *Chorales* and *Passions*.

I remember Bach's indication at the beginning of *St. Matthew Passion* "*Mit neuem Atem*" (*with a new breath*) that makes me think of the definition of the term *Atman* [from Sanskrit *ātman* *breath*] taken from an Indo-European etymological dictionary (Rendlich): "*Atman (soul)* is the spiritual essence of life, the infinitesimal part of the eternal and divine in man" and also "the free motion (*at*) of human (*man*) thinking directed to the union with *Brahman*." And I remember when I felt bewildered while thinking on how it could have happened that a group of engineers, scientists, industrialists spoke and used this language to organize more efficient systems to deprive human beings of their "*Atem*" (Did I use the term *human*?! Those men, women, children were "*Stücke*" or "pieces" turned into "*Figuren*", "Figures"). They also used Zyklon B produced by a National Chemical Industry, in compliance with the "holy duty" ("*heilig Pflicht*") of contributing to the realization of the "Millennial Reich", on which Primo Levi says "*the entire history of the brief 'Millennial Reich' can be reread as a war against memory*".

Amos Klausner (also known as *Amos Oz*, as he changed his last name to "*Oz*", Hebrew for "strength") is the Israel's most celebrated and greatest living novelist recipient of the Goethe Prize like Freud and Thomas Mann. In the fascinating book *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, he attempts to work out the suicide of his mother. In 2005 His essays include *The Tübingen Lectures*, a trilogy of lectures held at the University of Tübingen, published in Italian under the title "Contro il Fanatismo" (*How to cure a Fanatic*) almost four centuries after John Donne's death.

In the second essay called *How to cure a Fanatic* (2006) he writes:

«I began by saying that fanaticism often begins at home. Let me conclude by saying that the antidote can also be found at home, virtually at your fingertips. No man is an island, said John Donne, but I humbly dare to add to this: no man and no woman is an island, but everyone of us is a peninsula, half attached to the mainland, half facing the ocean; half connected to family and friends and culture and tradition and country and nation and sex and language and many other ties. And the other half wants to be left alone to face the ocean. I think we ought to be allowed to remain peninsulas. Every social and political system which turns each of us into a Darwinian island and the rest of humankind into an enemy or a rival is a monster. But at the same time every social and political and ideological system which wants to turn each of us into no more than a molecule of the mainland is also a monstrosity. The condition of peninsula is the proper human condition. That's what we are and that's what we deserve to remain. So, in a sense, in every house, in every family, in every human connection, in every human connection we actually have a relationship between a number of peninsulas and we better remember this before we try to shape each other and turn each other around and make the next person turn our way while he or she actually needs to face the ocean for a while. And this is true of social groups and of cultures and of civilisations and of nations and, yes, of Israelis and Palestinians. Not one of them is an island and not one of them can completely mingle with the other. Those two peninsulas should be related and at the same time left on their own. I know it is an unusual message in these days of violence and anger and revenge and fundamentalism and fanaticism and racism, all of which are loose in the Middle East and elsewhere. A sense of humour, the ability to imagine the other, the capacity to recognise the peninsular quality of everyone of us may be at least a partial defence against the fanatic gene which we all contain» (Amos Oz, 2006).

I prefer to quote this whole page rather than summarize it. I believe there exists no more appropriate description as such of the socio-cultural and psychological cause of the tragedy currently experienced by human beings particularly in the *Middle East*.

Once again, Amos Oz says:

«What we need is a painful compromise. The word compromise has a terrible reputation in Europe. Especially among young idealists, who always regard compromise as opportunism, as something dishonest, as something sneaky and shady, as a mark of a lack of integrity. Not in my vocabulary. For me the word compromise means life. And the opposite of compromise is not idealism, not devotion; the opposite of compromise is fanaticism and death» (Amos Oz, 2006, p. 8).

In the interview at the end of book, Amos Oz answers to the question: “*What distinguishes the idealist from the fanatic, in your view?*”:

«The difference between idealism and fanaticism is the distance between devotion and obsession. For the fanatic, but not for the idealist, ‘the end justifies all the means’ [...] The main error of many generations of world reformers lies in their mission to change human nature in one blow or through one revolution. Human nature doesn't seem to change [...] The only difference between lovemaking in the days of King David and lovemaking today is the cigarette afterwards».

I think of Jorge Corrente, an Italian Argentine psychoanalyst who did a Group Study on the mental depository area of fanaticism. He pointed out what Bion called “- - K” (minus minus K), which belongs to the irreducible and immutable, unlike Amos Oz's idea. At this point, it seems appropriate to highlight the importance of language and how it can be used and too often deformed for antithetical purposes.

In ancient Egypt, language was associated to Thoth, God of Knowledge, guardian of the scribes (*ses*) and repository of Wisdom, he had the power to give immortality through words phonetically symbolized by hieroglyphics. We should recall that this God communicated his wisdom only to a selected group of scribes known as “Followers of Thoth”.

Since then, it was clear that speech was powerful and was the vehicle of life and death.

The German language, Victor Klemperer, Martin Buber, Freud's "Rat Man", The Language of the Third Reich, The SS *Ahnenerbe*

Let me return now to my childish wonder, as previously mentioned, when I learned how to spell the oath written on my "Son of the She-Wolf"'s card and that I associate with my recent reading experience of the fascinating work of Victor Klemperer (Klemperer, 1947) which is entitled rather ironically with the acronym *LTI* (Lingua Tertii Imperii. a Philologist's Notebook), i.e. *The language of the Third Reich*.

The author, a Jewish professor of Literature at the Dresden University of Technology, survived to the Nazi persecutions thanks to Eva, his "Aryan" wife. He masterfully shows the process of creation of a new language through the analysis of terms and recurrent expressions of the ordinary language used and corrupted by the absolute power that, besides physical violence, used words to determine people's life or death.

It is no coincidence that the epigraph of the book is a maxim from the German Jewish theologian Franz Rosenzweig: "Sprache ist mehr als Blut" (Language is more than blood).

I remember the chapter for the use of the verb *Aufziehen* (to organize, to set up) used especially by Goebbels, then the use of the term *Fanatiker* (Fanatic), in chapter 8 "*Ten Years of Fascism*" by comparing the oratorical language beyond mere words, used by Mussolini and Hitler, and lastly the chapter "The curse of the superlative."

I hope not to do injustice to this masterpiece by not saying that all 36 chapters (included the afterword "Because of certain expressions") deserve a careful reading and can be a valuable *trait d'union* between language of the everyday life and an ideology as much totalizing as aberrant.

Victor Klemperer's secret diaries were published after his death (Klemperer, 1999, 2000) which he kept from 1933 to 1945 that in some way complete the book mentioned above, as well as being of greatest interest for his compelling descriptions day-by-day life events.

This abuse of the German language, makes me think of its opposite: an author who brought the same language to beautiful results which often involved the translation from the Hebrew and Yiddish. I am referring to Martin Buber, who still guides me not only in my professional activities. M. Buber was abandoned by his parents at the age of three and raised by his highly educated and affluent grandparents. His grandfather Solomon was a true philologist and Talmudist of great value and as M. Buber says, "a lover of the word, but my grandmother's love for the genuine word [...] was so direct and so devoted" (Buber, 1973, p. 14). Both were essential for his training. I repeatedly read his *Lessons to psychiatrists* of William Alanson White Institute, as well as the *Tales of the Hasidim*. (Buber 1973; Friedman 1955-1960).

I am quite aware of the limits that occur in the transition from the individual case to the collective one and how it is easier and more reassuring, adopting this "methodology" to illustrate socio-political events, especially those referring to the past century.

As psychiatrists, we know how the psychopathological structure of obsessive phobias can be refractory to attempted forms of treatment and how it is difficult to transform the defenses used by these patients. Just think of the case of obsessional neurosis described by Sigmund Freud, namely the "Rat Man" (Freud, 1964).

Therefore, in spite of this introduction, let me suggest that it can be found through the Nazi theories the creation of a dialectic between the phobic object and the obsessive-compulsive ritual: the first is embodied by *the different* (primarily the Jews, but also Gypsies, communists, mentally ill patients, etc, that is the "rats" in Freud's clinical case); by the most important chapters of art history, called "degenerate art" (*entartete kunst*) of artists such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, etc. and by the History of Music (from Mendelssohn Bartoldi, to Gustav Mahler, etc.).

The obsessive-compulsive ritual appears often with psychotic features, and is often a defense against separation anxiety, it can be acted collectively by the well-known structures made with Teutonic precision and using the most diverse rationalizations in order to prove the superiority of the race: the creation of the Millennial Reich, the "Aryan race", the supremacy of German culture, the German language as "language of philosophy" (Heidegger), etc.

They conducted many articulated researches around the racial heritage of the Germanic power founding an Institute (*The Ahnenerbe= Ancestors inheritance*) set up by Heinrich Himmler in 1935. This institute was part of the SS organisation (*SS Ahnenerbe Stiftung*). Himmler launched several archaeological expeditions particularly in Tibet (see Christopher Hale's book on Ernst Schäfer life and expeditions, a zoologist, as well as SS officer who, followed by Bruno Beger, an anthropologist who developed his "studies" on Jews who were deported to Auschwitz), "scientific" experiments (also criminals, in Dachau and other concentration camps), semantic and linguistic studies: see the excellent and exhaustive work of Marco Zagni.

Peter Levenda in a detailed analysis of the origins of *Ahnenerbe*, writes:

«I know, how to describe the Ahnenerbe?

Imagine that the evening adult education program of the New School for Social Research had suddenly become an independent government agency with a budget as big as the Defense Department, with Lyndon Larouche as president and, perhaps, Elizabeth Clare Prophet as the chairperson physics.

Or maybe the summer session at the University of California, Berkeley, had become militarized and all the students had immunity from prosecution for any crime they had committed, or would ever commit, and could conduct any form of independent study they liked as long as they wore their black uniforms with the silver death's head insignia at all times and swore an oath of personal loyalty to the dean.

Then one might have some idea of what the Ahnenerbe was, and of the type of people it first Attracted to its ranks.

It was a humanities program. With guns».

Primo Levi, Rudolf Hoess, Adolf Eichmann

At this point it seems appropriate to quote the book which includes the foreword written by Primo Levi, that is the Autobiography of Rudolf Höss. This book is of primary importance to understand some of the psychological aspects of an "exemplary" Nazi. Rudolf Höss, former commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp, wrote his memoirs in prison while awaiting execution. He was sentenced to death by the Polish Supreme National Tribunal and hanged in 1947 in the main camp of Auschwitz.

Rudolf Höss says about the *Reichsführer-SS*, his immediate superior Heinrich Himmler:

«For Himmler, Germany was the only nation which had the right to exercise supremacy in Europe. All other nations were second rate. The nations with predominantly Nordic blood were to be treated favorably with the goal of incorporating into Germany. The nations of Eastern blood were to be divided and suppressed into insignificance. They were to become serfs».

And here's what he told about his childhood:

«I was especially attracted to the large city water tower. For hours on end I would listen in secret to the rushing water behind its thick walls. I never could understand what this was, even though my parents tried to explain it to me. Most of the time, however, I went to the stables to see the horses. If someone wanted to find me, all he had to do was to go to the stables. I was absolutely fascinated by horses. There simply wasn't enough time for stroking, talking to, and feeding them sweets. If the grooming brushes were handy, I would immediately begin brushing and combing the horses. The farmer was always afraid that I would get hurt as I would creep between the horse's legs as I brushed them. Never did any animal ever hit, bite, or harm me in any way. Even the wildest bull the farmer had was my best friend. I was never afraid of dogs, and they never harmed me either.

My favorite trick was to sneak off to the barns when I was supposed to be taking a nap. My mother tried everything to break me of this obsessive love of animals, but it was completely useless because I didn't pay any attention to her. She thought it was too dangerous. I enjoyed playing by myself or finding things to do alone. I didn't like it when others tried to join in and I didn't like being watched by anybody. I was and would always be a loner. I had an irresistible passion for water. I had to constantly wash and bathe. I would

take any opportunity to wash or bathe in a tub or stream that flowed through our garden. I ruined a lot of toys and clothes by doing this. Even today I have this passion for water» (Höss, p. 49).

It is striking how he accepted that he kept doing the same compulsive rituals which started during his childhood as an adult.

About his tendency to be lonely this was somehow compensate by a great love for animals, especially horses:

«On my seventh birthday, I was given Hans, a coal-black pony with flashing eyes and a long mane. I was exploding with joy. I had finally found my friend. Hans was so faithful That h Followed me everywhere, just like a dog. When my parents were away, I would even take him up to my room. I got along well with the servants, and they looked the other way as to make as my childish behavior was Concerned, and they never told me on. In the area where we now lived there were playmates my age. With the few friends I had, I played the same childish games and all the pranks as children have throughout the ages all over the world. But best of all, I enjoyed going with Hans into the Haardt Forest, where we were all alone, riding for hours on end without a living soul around. Life became more serious once school started. During the first years of elementary school, nothing worth Mentioning happened. I studied hard, did my homework as quickly as possible, so that I could have time to play around with Hans. My parents gave me the freedom to do as I wanted because my father had made a vow that I would lead a religious life and become a priest. The way I was raised was entirely affected by this. I was raised in a strong military fashion because of my father. Because of his faith. there was a heavy religious atmosphere in our family. My father was a fanatic Catholic. During our time In Baden-Baden, I seldom saw him because he traveled for months at a time or was busy with other matters. This all changed in Mannheim. My father now took the time every day to give me some attention, whether it was to look over my schoolwork or talk about my future vocation as a priest. I especially liked his stories about his service in Ost Afrika: his descriptions of the battles with the rebellious natives, their culture and work, and their mysterious religious worship. I listened in radiant rapture as he spoke of the blessed and civilizing activities of the missionary society. I resolved that I would become a missionary no matter what, and that I would go into darkest Africa, even venture into the center of the primeval forest It was especially exciting when one of the old, bearded African fathers who knew my father in East Africa came to visit. I did not budge from the spot so that I would not miss a single word of the conversation. Yes, I even forgot all about my Hans» (*ibidem*).

This “child” first grew up with a Catholic “fanatic” father (*“But be careful: for Höss, as in the overall Nazi vocabulary, the adjective “fanatic” always has a positive ring,”* as Primo Levi writes in the Foreword). He became a young SS and eventually- accomplished his brilliant career when he was ordered by Heinrich Himmler to become the commander of Auschwitz, when the concentration camp was still under construction. In this role, he later introduced the use of Zyklon B, used normally for rats and cockroaches, more efficient than the gas from combustion engines.

Repeatedly Höss talks about his feelings of pity:

«Many heartbreaking scenes were experienced by all who were present. For instance, in the spring of 1942 hundreds of people in the full bloom of life walked beneath the budding fruit trees of the farm into the gas chamber to their death, most of them without a hint of what was going to happen to them» (*ibidem*, p. 159).

And on his confidential relationship with his subordinates who felt free to express their anxieties and doubts to him, he writes:

«Is what we have to do here necessary? Is it necessary that hundreds of thousands of women and children have to be annihilated?» And I, who countless times deep inside myself had asked the same question, had to put them off by reminding them that it was Hitler's order. I had to tell them that it was necessary to destroy all the Jews in order to forever free Germany and the future generations from our toughest enemy» (*ibidem*, p. 161)

On his frequent conversations with Adolf Eichmann who - as we know - was the Secretary of the Wannsee Conference to ensure the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” also by supervising the flow railway Stuecke directed to Auschwitz, he writes:

«I had many detailed discussions concerning every phase of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” with Eichmann without ever letting him know what was going on inside me. I tried everything possible to get Eichmann to open up about what his deepest convictions were about the “Final Solution.” But, even when we were alone and the wine and schnapps were flowing know that he was in the most talkative mood, he revealed that he was totally obsessed with the idea of destroying every Jew he could get his hands on. Ice cold and without mercy, we had to carry out this annihilation as quickly as possible. Any compromise, even the smallest, would bitterly avenge itself later on.

Faced with such grim determination I had to bury all my human inhibitions as deeply as possible. In fact, I have to confess openly that after such conversations with Eichmann these human emotions seemed almost like treason against the Führer. There was no escaping this conflict as to concerned as I was. I had to continue to carry out the process of destruction. I had to experience the mass murder and coldly to watch it without any regard for the doubts which uprooted my deepest inner feelings. I had to watch it all with cold indifference. Even minor incidents, which others probably would not have noticed or been affected by, stayed on my mind for a long time.

And yet, I really had no reason to complain about being bored at Auschwitz.

When something upset me very much and it was impossible for me to go home to my family, I would climb onto my horse and ride until I chased away the horrible pictures. Often I went into the horse stables during the night, and there found peace among my darlings» (*ibidem*, p. 163).

The feeling of guilt, Revisionists/negationists, Karl Jaspers and Heidegger, Giorgio Perlasca, Enrico Deaglio, Simon Wiesenthal, Fred Leuchter, Francesco Rotondi, Y.Y. Wiernik, Giorgio Armani

Speaking here of the “feeling of guilt” seems quite surreal and I wonder how would Hannah Arendt have had commented these lines, if she would have read them. Very recently, Bettina Stangneth through a long and patient research work (in which she included the interview made by the Dutch journalist Willem Sassen to Eichmann in Buenos Aires) gives us a new image of Eichmann completely different from the one described by H. Arendt. See also Burgio (2012, 2013) and Donaggio.

Who did not bury his “impulses” was Giorgio Perlasca, fascist of proven faith who long lived in Spain as a businessman and worked hardly in Budapest during war risking his life for the salvation of the Jews that the German SS sought. For this purpose Perlasca requested political asylum at the Spanish embassy and started falsifying various documents as unauthorized spanish Consul protecting more than 5,000 Jews who lived in Budapest from deportation helping most of them emigrate to Israel. He wrote a book on this experience entitled *The impostor (L'impostore)*. Later on, the journalist Enrico Deaglio published a superb book-length study on Perlasca entitled, recalling ironically Hannah Arendt, *The Banality of Goodness* (2002).

Deaglio interviewed Perlasca in Padua where he lived and refers a sentence that said, “*Had you been in my shoes, what would you have done?*”.

Again, we must recall Primo Levi (Belpoliti) in his foreword written in March 1985, two years before his tragic death, for the admirable, passionate and measured analyse of Höss’ “speech”, in which the Italian author wonders why the need to re-publish this book after 38 years from the execution of the author: he lists at least two reasons:

«The first reason is a contingent one. Several years ago, an insidious trend was launched when people began affirming that the number of victims of the Nazi era was to less than stated by “official history,” and that no poison gas was used to kill human beings in the camps. In regard to both these points Rudolph Höss's testimony is complete and explicit, nor would he have formulated it in such a clear and articulate manner, and with so many details confirmed by survivors and by material evidence, if he had been acting under

coercion, as the “revisionists” allege. Höss often lies to justify himself but never about facts; indeed, he seems proud of his organizational work. He and his supposed instigators would have had to be very shrewd to concoct such a coherent and plausible story out of thin air. The confessions extorted by the Inquisition, the Moscow Trials of the 1930's, or the witch hunts had an entirely different tone.

The second reason for republishing Höss' book is an essential one with permanent validity. At present, when many tears are being shed over the end of ideologies, it strikes me that this text reveals in an exemplary fashion how far an ideology can go when it is accepted as radically as by Hitler Germans, indeed by extremists in general. Ideologies can be good or bad; it is good to know them, confront them, and attempt to evaluate them; but it is always bad to espouse them, even if they are cloaked with respectable words such as “Country” and “Duty.” The ultimate consequences of blindly accepted duty—that is, Nazi Germany's Führerprinzip, the principle of unquestioning devotion to Great Leaders—are demonstrated by the story of Rudolph Höss» (P. Levi in: Höss, p. 8).

I would add that these lines are still very valid because the “revisionists”, previously mentioned by Primo Levi, were implemented by the “Holocaust deniers” who even deny the existence of gas chambers! See the notorious *Leuchter Report* in which Fred Leuchter (fake engineer-American chemist) was convinced that homicidal gassings never occurred.

F. Leuchter was disapproved by the French toxicologist Jean-Claude Pressac, as well as by the shocking testimony, among many, of Shlomo Venezia, Italian Jew from Thessaloniki, one of the few survivors of the *Sonderkommando* (special units) of Auschwitz III camp (Birkenau), where he was assigned to work both in gas chambers and crematoria. (*Venezia* in Di Cesare, 2012). Robert Faurisson, essayist who had a French father and a Scottish mother, head chief of the *revisionists* denied the existence of gas chambers and even of the Holocaust *tout court*. He used this “report” in which he edited the introduction to rise his endless controversy against all evidence for which he was condemned also by the French court where, among other things, he was defeated by the lawyer Robert Badinter (former Minister of Justice who sponsored the abolition of the death penalty in 1981), eventually by calling him “forger of History” Regarding these topics see also Vidal-Naquet.

Francesco Rotondi physician, examines with great objectivity this “dispute” in his work based on a critical review of an extensive bibliography with a particular focus on Faurisson, Leuchter and Pressac. The title is a sarcastic reference to a sentence uttered by Fred Leuchter in February 1988, supported by Robert Faurisson, when he went with his young bride to Auschwitz shortly after his marriage as if it was their “honeymoon”!(Rotondi, 2005).

I also remember the report written by Yankel-Yacov Wiernik, Polish carpenter, one of the few who survived from the deportation to Treblinka from the Warsaw ghetto. The Italian edition is completed by the text, originally in Yiddish, of the sworn declaration that Wiernik, resident in Israel, said during Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem, in which he illustrated with the help of a plastic model made by himself the structure of the extermination camp that he was forced to complete for his great ability as a craftsman (Y.Y.Wiernik).

It is well known the story of Karl Jaspers, outstanding psychiatrist and philosopher and his much beloved wife Gertrud Mayer, a Jew dedicatee of all his works. He was put by Nazis in front of choosing between divorce and resignation from University teaching. He was ready to commit suicide with his wife, but the University of Bale in Switzerland offered him a chair: his script on the guilt of Germany (Jaspers, 1965) is quite enlightening and still an useful base for developments on this subject. (look at the excellent work of Elena Alessiato). His friendship with Heidegger always based on “sie” and not on “du” can be easily deduced from their Correspondence.

Heidegger answered to a disconcerted Jaspers who stressed the lack of culture of Adolf Hitler just became head of State: “the culture doesn't matter! Instead look at his wonderful hands!”(June 1933). Here could be right to recall some features of narcissist character: Giorgio Armani in order to sell a perfume (“Acqua di Gio”) put it close to the naked bodies of young men; Heidegger to sell his “self-object” to Jaspers put in front of him the hands ! The bodies were kept for Leni Riefensthal's craftsmanship and the body of the Great Dictator for Charlie Chaplin!.....

What is striking about these whole stories is the absence of guilt. Simon Wiesenthal, successful Austrian engineer- architect, “Nazi-hunter” survived from Auschwitz and dedicated the most of his

long life bringing war criminals to justice, even if only partial and deferred, reports that among 1100 SS officers only 3 declared themselves as disappointed and somehow repentant. All the others believed to be right.

After the end of the war Heidegger kept silent and went away with the face as bold as brass from Rudolf Bultmann, evangelic theologian, who asked him to imitate Saint Augustin (an Autor well known by Heidegger) in order to apologise his guilts.

One of the characteristics of the German language is the use of the same word for two concepts which are not necessarily opposed, unlike Latin (*sacer, altus, etc.*); Indeed *schuld* means both “guilt” and “debt” - *schuldgefühl* is “guilty”; *schuldig sein* is “being in debt for something”; *schuldlos* is “innocent”.

I wish to recall (Meltzer, Giuganino, 1967) R.E. Money-Kyrle, a British psychoanalyst, who applied Melanie Klein’s theories to the study of ethics, politics and group morality and draw conclusions and assumptions of greatest interest. Based on the Freudian premise that every true sense of guilt stems from the conflict with the internal representation of a parental figure integrated, he distinguishes two types of people, depending on the type of guilt that they can experience, and on the situations which may cause it.

Those who suffer mostly from a persecutory superego, experience a feeling of “persecutory guilt” in the situations in which they develop a conflict with this super-ego or some external power (i.e see the followers of totalitarian regimes).

Those who have built a superego represented by good figures, feel mainly a “depressive guilt” in the situations which involve abuse, betrayal or lack of protection by the people or values symbolizing these internal figures. Therefore there are fundamental differences between these different features, which do not belong only to the quality of remorse and in the type of situation that causes it, but it depends also on the reaction to the feeling of guilt.

The first type reacts by trying to propitiate the superego or external powers that it represents. The second type reacts instead by repairing the aggression, which is both internal and external, and the effects of it. These two types of consciousness can obviously coexist within the same individual and this conflict can persist for a lifetime, but mainly it resolves itself in one way or another, organizing the patterns of their consciousness.

Leon Grinberg, a psychoanalyst from Argentina clearly distinguishes these two kinds of guilt, such as recognizing the fundamental elements of the “persecutory guilt”, resentment, hopelessness, fear, pain, self-blame, to the extreme manifestations of melancholia. In the depressive guilt are predominant the feelings of the pain, the interest in the object and for themselves, the nostalgia, the sense of responsibility, and subsequent sublimation and reparation actions, as it happens in the normal process of mourning.

If the term “guilt” in german means also “debt” we may wonder that the majority of Germans delegated to the Führer all power (E. Fromm): on one hand they felt exempted from participating in first person to their nation greatest event and on the other, they felt, or rather, they would have felt indebted / blamed if they failed in loyalty to the Führer and / or the SS Officers. As an example of the use of language that can be done in a completely different context, I remember the lyrics of one *Lieder*, the wonderful *The crow* in *WinterReise* collection (*Winter Journey*) written by Franz Schubert (who wrote more than 600 *Lieder* !)

Loyalty onto the grave (Treue bis zum Grabe)”... however, in this case referred to the love for a girl.

You could therefore say that the Nazis, among those excelled Rudolf H□ss as we have seen already, were obsessed by a sense of duty, obedience, order and efficiency. In fact, they experienced their feeling of guilt in the regrettable possibility to not blindly obey to the will of Adolf Hitler (that is the “holy duty” already mentioned). The latter was engaged, in turn, in the realization of the “Millennial Reich”, assisted for his theatrical knowledge by the architect Albert Speer, who actually lasted twelve years and three months.

I think about how the family Goebbels concluded its existence, in Berlin bunker, besieged by the Red Army: the mother poisoned with cyanide her children while they slept for morphine and then committed suicide with her husband. The children, a boy and five girls, all had a name beginning with H, as Hitler. They had been all “*Treue bis zum Grabe*”...

Vasilij Grossman, Treblinka, Elie Wiesel, Elias Canetti, Catastrophe Theory

Few months ago, scouring on Amazon website, I found an Adelphi booklet (*The Hell of Treblinka, 1944*) written by Vasilij Grossman, who became a war correspondent and followed the Red Army and arrived at the Treblinka camp in September 1944, thirteen months after the epic victorious revolt. I was deeply impressed by that, which is in some ways integrated by the pains taking work of Gitta Sereny who interviewed Franz Stangl, former commandant of Treblinka, prisoner for life sentence in Duesseldorf.

We should recall that the deportation trains arrived to a fake station in Ober -Majdan which masked Treblinka in order to mislead for a moment the “travelers” and to erase even in the popular lexicon the term *Treblinka* as it was associated with something terrible that you had to ignore. In thirteen months at the Treblinka camp were killed more than 2,000,000 human beings...

Now, I understand better the semantic equivalent of the term *schuld* (guilt / debt) and I feel admiration and deep respect for Vasilij S. Grossman who managed to describe what he saw and express what he heard and felt being a great man and writer. Grossman, by doing so, assumed the debt (*schuld*) and I believe we should all be grateful for this, also because German was not his native language. Treblinka is a small city in Poland, 60 km from Warsaw and was planned and then regularly inspected by Heinrich Himmler. After the battle of Stalingrad, Himmler ordered the incineration of tens of thousands bodies buried in mass graves and for this were created the “crematoria” quite unique: hundreths of moats about five meter deep, with grids at half height made with rail tracks on which one could align dozens of bodies simultaneously.

Therefore, I read:

«It is quiet. The tops of the pine trees on either side of the railway line are barely stirring. It is these pines, this sand, this old tree stump that millions of human eyes saw as their freight wagons came slowly up to the platform. With true German accuracy whitewashed stones have been laid along the borders of the black road.

The ashes and cinders crushed swish softly. We enter the camp. We tread the earth of Treblinka. The lupine pods split open at the least touch; they split with a faint ping and millions of tiny peas scatter over the earth. The sounds of the falling peas and the bursting pods come together to form a single soft, sad melody. It is as if a funeral knell – a barely audible, sad, broad, peaceful-tolling is being carried to us from the very depths of the earth. And, rich and swollen as if saturated with flax oil, the earth sways beneath our feet-earth of Treblinka, bottomless earth, earth as unsteady as the sea. This wilderness behind a barbed-wire fence has swallowed more human lives than all the earth's oceans and seas have swallowed since the birth of mankind».

Then follows a long and harrowing list of items that were found in the luggages of those who were murdered and that the SS officers had found along with linen and kitchen humble utensils: shaving brushes, child's shoes with red pompoms...

Yes, children! Those thousands who, from the notorious *Vel d'Hiv* (Velodrome) in Paris, were sent to Drancy and then, most of them to Auschwitz and those who came with their parents were torn away and forced into gas chambers. Few of them survived: see Boris Cyrulnik, Allan Zullo.

It comes to my mind the lines that I once read at the memorial *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem written by the poet Chajjm Nachman Bjalik, an Ukrainian who also wrote in Yiddish, who was one of the pioneers of modern Hebrew poetry and which, as I recall the English version, said: “The vengeance of a small child, Satan has not yet created.” See the detailed work of Sara Valentina Di Palma and the moving personal testimony of Denise Holstein; she was sixteen when she was deported to Auschwitz - Birkenau with her parents (considered “too old for work”) along with two hundred

orphans Jews who were all gassed. Some of the children who survived had their “revenge”, in a certain way, letting us participate to the horrors they lived.

I think of Elie (Eliezer) Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, who was deported at fifteen years old to Auschwitz and Buchenwald with her parents and three sisters; his mother and younger sister Tzipora (*Tsipouka*, with golden-hair) were immediately killed. Elie remained as much as possible close to his father who got very sick. He kept for nearly fifty years his father’s final words (in Yiddish language) with the feeling of guilt of not having been able to help him until he was finally able to write them down in French in one of his extraordinary writings. Wiesel, was polyglot and interpreter, he wrote, essentially in French, more than fifty books, articles and essays. His first 900 pages book was written in Yiddish and then was adapted to the first French translation and published in 1958 with a foreword written by Francois Mauriac whose last lines are: «I had nothing else to say but I embraced him crying» (Wiesel, 1958).

Quoting one of Night’s most famous passages: “*Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp [...] Never shall I forget the little faces of the children [...] Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never*”. (Wiesel, 1982)) Marion Wiesel translation, Wiesel’s wife. Very moving is also the conversation between Jorge Semprun (1955) also deported to Buchenwald, and Wiesel, fifty years later.

We may recall another child, Edgar Feuchtwanger who could finally emigrate with his family to London where he became a respected University lecturer. During the war he lived in Munich just in front of Hitler’s house, when the young Führer was in his forties. Quoting a line from his *memoirs*: “*I imagine what Hitler’s life must be like. I wonder what he eats for breakfast in the morning. I see his shadow at the window. He hates us. He hates me, without even knowing that I exist.*” See also Thomas Burgenthal.

Returning to Vasilij Grossman with his severe, painful but beautiful prose:

«Yes, it is all true. The last hope, the last wild hope that it was all just a terrible dream, has gone. And the lupine pods keep popping open, and the tiny peas keep pattering down—and this really does all sound like a funeral knell rung by countless little bells from under the earth. And it feels as if your heart must come to a stop now, gripped by more sorrow, more grief, more anguish than any human being can endure [...] Scholars, sociologists, criminologists, psychiatrists, and philosophers — everyone is asking how all this can have happened. How indeed? Was it something organic? Was it a matter of heredity, upbringing, environment, or external conditions? Was it a matter of historical fate, or the criminality of the German leaders? Somehow the embryonic traits of a racial theory that sounded simply comic when expounded by the second-rate charlatan professors or pathetic provincial theoreticians of nineteenth-century Germany—the contempt in which the German philistine held “Russian pigs,” “Polish cattle,” “Jews reeking of garlic,” “debauched Frenchmen,” “English shopkeepers,” “hypocritical Greeks,” and “Czech blockheads”; all the nonsense about the superiority of the Germans to every other race on earth, all the cheap nonsense that seemed so comical, such an easy target for journalists and humorists — all this, in the course of only a few years, ceased to seem merely infantile and was transformed into a threat to mankind. It became a deadly threat to human life and freedom and a source of unparalleled crime, bloodshed, and suffering. There is much now to think about, much that we must try to understand».

I strongly welcome and assume Grossman’s questions: “What was that? How did this happen? “. I try to give a limited answer from a gestalt point of view to this reality. I will refer to the “*Catastrophe Theory*”, being aware that it is a defensive way to deal with the “*Banality of Evil*” in order to not be engulfed by the object. It is well known that this theory was formulated by the mathematician René Thom and is able to describe not only the “catastrophic” changes of a algorithms system but also other outcomes of the interaction of multiple systems. For example, a mass of water which is freezed at zero degrees turns “catastrophically” into ice changing its characteristics and properties becoming different from those of the previous state. The parameters here are essentially the temperature and the atmospheric pressure plus the phases are liquid, solid and gas once the temperature increases at the boiling point. Though it is sufficient to increase the temperature and the pressure to change ice into the liquid phase. Another metaphor can be the transformation of a harmless melanocyte into a potentially deadly melanoma or the intestinal

bacterial flora which, from having a useful function, turns to be a virulent producer of serious, terminal illnesses.

If we attempt to describe the socio-political background that led to Nazism, we can easily realize the limits and the inadequacy of these models. Just think about the Weimar Republic, the uncontrollable inflation, the humiliated militarism after the Treaty of Versailles, the old Hindenburg, *Generalfeldmarschall* who, after free elections, gave power to Adolf Hitler; the anti-Semitic background, especially in Vienna. This context was particularly experienced by the military caste as an intolerable narcissistic injury which may explain at least in part the blind obedience of many general also of old Prussian nobility to the orders of the Führer. If we watch Hitler in today's documentaries, we often notice in his attitude comic aspects similar to a puppet.

Elias Canetti, in his work entitled *Crowds and Power*, written in 38 years, is a great source of informations and constructive ideas. In the section on "*Germany and Versailles*" he states that the disbanding of the German army and "*the prohibition on universal military service (ordered by the "Diktat") was the birth of National Socialism*":

«Every closed crowd which is dissolved by force transforms itself into an open crowd to which it imparts all its own characteristics. The party came to the rescue of the army, and the party had no limits set to its recruitment from within the nation» (Canetti, 1960).

The National Anthem of the second and third Reich had a beautiful music melody written for string quartet by the blameless composer Joseph Haydn, which was followed by these famous lyrics: "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*" ("*Germany, Germany above all*") whose singing led a great part of those generals and soldiers sacrifice their lives. The swastika symbol and the motto "*Gott mit uns*" (God with us) was written on top of the Wehrmacht soldier's belt buckles, while on the SS Officers ones was written "*Meine Ehre heisst Treue*" (*My honour is called loyalty*) personally suggested by Hitler. The full dress SS uniform was, apart from the shirt, a black dress with a cap with the "*Totenkopf*" badge on it (literally death's head, *Lumsden*).

This discussion may be extended, in addition to the soldier caste, to the whole culture background which in different ways supported the National Socialism. For example, the famous jurist, Carl Schmitt.

Goodbye Heidegger, Victor Farias, Corrado Augias, Paul Celan, Marco Paolini

The story of Martin Heidegger, has been through the years widely discussed. He was originally Catholic and fellow of theological studies, he was then considered as a leader of the philosophical thought, not only in Germany. However it has is now confirmed by countless contributions that he supported Nazis Ideology until his death. Among others, we recall the works of the Chilean Victor Farias (1987), the one of Emanuel Faye (2005) and finally the one of Franco Volpi, professor and eminent scholar, who after many years of passionate adherence to Heidegger's thought, just before his sudden death, changed his mind and wrote the article called "*Goodbye Heidegger*" in which the author firmly criticizes his previous involvement with Heidegger because his affiliation with Nazism (Volpi, Hersch).

Victor Farias recently came out with a new book (2008) which updates his previous one (Farias, 1987). Lastly, we arrive to the recent publication of *Heidegger's black Notebooks 97 (Schwarze Hefte)* which he wrote as *memoirs* after the war (Di Cesare, 2014). In this writing, which had to be published only after his death, Heidegger who had regularly paid the membership fee to the National Socialist Party from 1933 to 1945, denies the widespread belief of his "silence after Auschwitz"; in fact he also says to have mentioned about the gas chambers in his manuscript *History of being (1969)*. According to him the Jews, were the promoters of modernity, would have destroyed the spirit of the West favoring the acceleration of technology and, consequently, the rise of the American civilization and Bolshevism, both hated by Heidegger (see: Zimmerman, 1990; Wolin, 1993; Trawny, 2015).

Corrado Augias (2015) writes in his review on Heidegger's Black Notebooks:

«Their extermination has been technical too, it was an apocalyptic moment in which the agents of destruction had to destroy themselves. He uses the term “Self destructive” (*Selbst Vernichtung*). The disciplined German people could have stopped the ruin, but the Allies didn't understand and suddenly defeated Germany. (Sic!). Learning about these judgements makes me think that the real demon of technology is what is hidden inside an abstract philosophical technique which causes the deprivation even for a genius of any contact with humanity».

I cannot imagine, among many others, Guglielmo Marconi, Werner Heisenberg, the Wright brothers... All Jews, since they accelerated technology!

To put it briefly, I believe Heidegger was possessed by a boundless narcissism, an *hybris* to say it in Greek, supported by his deep knowledge of Philosophy, that led him, among other things, to name himself as “Shepherd of Being” and to declare that the modern language of philosophy was only German, “his” German... We have to recall when Heidegger had lunch in Rome (1936) with Karl Löwith showing him a Nazi *swastika* on his jacket pocket. Löwith was Jewish and very sick at the time, he had been his former student and was still devoted to him despite everything, He attempted to have a dialogue with Heidegger, in his hermitage, but was disappointed. As it was stressed by Franco Volpi, quoting Jeanne Hersch, Heidegger was deeply disappointed not by the National Socialism but by the Universities Faculty (Berlin, Marburg, Munich) to which he always opposed the “grimace of contempt”.

Let me remember also Paul Celan, a great Jewish poet of German language, originally Rumanian who changed his name from Anszel to Celan. He survived from Auschwitz and refuted the assertion of Theodor Adorno that “after Auschwitz it would be barbaric to write poetry” writing some of the most excruciating and splendid verses of this time (Gnani). I just remember the dazzling poem “Todesfugue” (Death's fugue or Death's escape) with the arrowing repetition of the oximoron “Black milk” on his tragic experience and an indelible recall of “the golden hairs of Margarete and the hairs of hashes of Sulamith”. Another verse remains carved in the memory: “Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland sein Auge ist blau) (Death is a teacher from Germany its Eye is blue): the eye's colour of the Aryans handling death ! Celan attempted repeatedly to have a dialogue with Heidegger, like Karl Löwith, in his hermitage in the Black Forest, but in the last one he blamed the philosopher for not listening him. Heidegger on his side declared: “Celan is sick; he is incurable” Few weeks after Paul Celan committed suicide by drowning himself in the Seine in Paris (Max Dorra, France-Lanord, Lyon, Catà, Darsiè, Bambach, Moroncini, Zanzotto, Bachmann).

This confirms that the comparison between these two persons was insoluble unless we accept the opinion of Vitiello: “The poetic language of Celan is born from the death of the philosophical language of Heidegger” (Daque- Vitiello). An excellent description of this unsuccessful relationship is given by George Steiner.

I would say that the growth of individual narcissism, “authenticated” by theories on the “Aryan race”, the phenotype of the young blonde with blue eyes and family tree “*judenfrei*”; maybe conceived by a license from one of the fronts of the war, allowed (with the help of technique so deprecated by Heidegger: aircraft, tanks, etc.!) the invasion in most of Europe, the “scientific” organization of Dachau, Auschwitz et coetera, the “Aktion T4” program on the removal of those “lives which are not worth of living”, that is all the “defective” humans (about 300,000 people mentally ill, disabled, homosexuals and others were murdered by physicians and nurses). About this program of forced euthanasia see the touching *Ausmerzen* (which means “to weed out”) written by Marco Paolini (2012). This popular German term was taken from the shepherds and referring to the lambs and sheep that get tired during the path are then suppressed in March, before the transhumance; see among others, the documented work of Marcella Ravenna.

Another aspect can be summarized in the following sentence by Sigmund Freud written in one of the conversations with Ferenczi. If I remember it correctly, the sentence is “*The black tide of occultism*”, on certain theories of Carl Gustav Jung. I am referring here to what is irrational, sometimes occult which interferes with the socio-political life of a nation from the Middle Ages to

our time and the fortune gained by the astrologers and similar in most diverse socio-political contexts.

Giorgio Galli, Peter Levenda, Heinrich Himmler, Marco Dolcetta, Eduard Conte and Cornelia Essner

A useful introduction before examining the occult and “mystics” aspects of Nazism can be read in the book entitled *Esoteric and politics* by Giorgio Galli, professor of History of Political Sciences. He conducted a survey on the interesting relationship between esotericism, political culture and power: from Scientology to Nazism, from Reagan to astrology, on the genesis of historical myths and on the relationship between history and myth. Other works of Giorgio Galli deserve a careful attention, such as *Hitler e la cultura occulta*; *Hitler e il nazismo magico* and *Intervista sul nazismo magico* with Paolo Dossena. Let me just point out that, according to Galli, the magical elements, esoteric and more or less all public knowledge were part of the Nazi theory and practice. In fact, it is known that Hitler attended to spiritual sessions and that for a long time entertained relations with Erik Hanussen, a clairvoyant, astrologer and actor who instructed Hitler how to speak to big audiences, murdered by National Socialists in 1933. Rudolf Hess was also a passionate lover of astrology. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, was used to surround himself with visionaries and believed that he was the incarnation of Henry the Fowler, Duke of Saxony who became the king of the first German Empire. “*There is also testimony that he admitted to speaking with the dead king's ghost at night*” (Levenda).

Himmler found in Westphalia in the Teutoburg Forest an old and abandoned castle named Wewelsburg, had it restored and changed its name into the “SS Castle” or “center of the world” (“Mittelpunkt der Welt” in German). Inside the “Generals hall” was a large round table around which for certain occasions (during spring solstice) sat twelve of the highest SS officers in silent recollection. It was a clear reference to the Knights of King Arthur; underneath this room was another circular room named the “kingdom of the dead” which contained an empty stone fountain in which were burned ceremonially the heraldic symbols of the Knights of the Black Order

Hitler, says Peter Levenda, admired the organization, liturgy and mysticism of the Church which he debased most sacred dogmas: “*The SS organization had been built up by Himmler on the principles of the Order of the Jesuits. The service statutes and spiritual exercises prescribed by Ignatius Loyola formed a pattern which Himmler assiduously tried to copy. Absolute obedience was the supreme rule; each and every order had to be accepted without question.*” (1995). Moreover, in his exercises St. Ignatius prescribed obedience “*perinde ac cadaver*” (“just to be turned into a corpse)..... this explains why Hitler in informal occasions called Himmler: “My Ignatius”.

Quoting once again Rudolph Höss:

«As leader of the SS, Himmler's person was sacred. His fundamental orders in the name of the Führer were holy. There was no reflection, no interpretation, no explanation about These orders. They were then carried out ruthlessly, regardless of the final consequences, even if it meant giving your life for them. Quite a few did just that during the war. It was not in vain that the leadership training of the SS officers held up the Japanese as shining examples of those willing to sacrifice their lives for the state and for the emperor, who was also their god. SS education was not just a series of useless high school lectures. It went far deeper, and Himmler knew very well what he could demand of his SS. Outsiders cannot possibly understand that there was not a single SS officer who would refuse to obey orders from Himmler, or perhaps even try to kill him because of a severely harsh order. Whatever the Fuhrer or Himmler ordered was always right. Even democratic England has its saying “My country, right or wrong”, and every patriotic Englishman follows it».

After reading these lines, it seems now almost superfluous to quote Milgram and his studies from obedience to authority with his experiments to inflict suffering realized by actors and volunteers (see among others Zimbardo, 1989, 2007). But let me remember Etienne de La Boétie, a rather neglect precursor of many modern thinkers and political leaders and the most significant, a “self-

object” of Michel de Montaigne, who in his early youth wrote the “*Discours de la servitude volontaire*”, published clandestinely in 1548 as *Le Contr'un*. In this work, highly appreciated by Montaigne, he describes the strategy of non cooperation, a sort of non violent disobedience as a really effective weapon, like has been realized to-day by Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and others.

It seems to me worth noting the work of Marco Dolcetta in which the author reconstructs the stories of many representatives of the Nazi Germany, from Mengele to Eichmann both survived after the second world war. And what about their descendants, particularly in Latin America, who “*have nurtured new generations of followers, clinging to a belief which never dies, today more vital and threatening than ever.*”(Dolcetta).

Finally, I remember the admirable work of Édouard Conte, ethnologist, and Cornelia Essner, from Berlin, entitled *La quête de la race. Une anthropologie du nazisme* (Hachette Paris, 1955) of which the Italian translation is reduced and revised by the same authors with the title of *Cult of blood. Anthropology of the Nazism* (in Italian *Culti di sangue. Antropologia del Nazismo*, Carocci Editore Rome, 2000). It is a great source of information and new perspectives; I quote only a few paragraphs of the seven chapters: “*Cult of blood and the Führer worship*”, “*War on Christianity*”, “*The party and the race question*”, “*The Nuremberg Laws and the issue of the half-Jews*”, the “*Plasma ancestors, Sippe and blood*”(in german *Sippe* means clan / lineage), “*The dead soldier as a bridegroom*”, “*Blood and Soil: The Zamość operation and Germanization of the Eastern lands*”(Poland!). I would like to underline the manic obsessive pseudoscientific research of the ancestors and relatives to identify the so-called “*Mischlinge*” (half-Jews). It seems that this was the case of Hitler's father, as his mother (Hitler's grandmother) might have conceived him out of wedlock with a Jew whom she worked for.

Goodness be to you! Grossman's “Life and Fate”, Sof'ja Osipovna, Levinton, Claudia Zonghetti, Ilya Ehrenburg

Following these reflections I would like to share some other thoughts. I admire Grossman's capacity to share his great willingness to empathize. I try to imagine what he must have experienced. I go back to the lines taken from the *Hell of Treblinka* (1944): “*a sad, sweet melody... the death knell of small bells.*” I think this is the opposite of what A. Camus wrote about the “*tender indifference of the world*” in *The stranger* (*L'Étranger*, 1942) through which the maximum horror of human cruelty was expressed by the Algerian war.

In addition to the *Hell of Treblinka*, I must recall another Grossman's work that impressed me, that is *Goodness be to you!* (1961), a collection of short stories including the last one which is also the title of the novel (a common Armenian greeting); another moving novel for its solemnity and tragic classicism, is the *Sistine Madonna* (in an earlier edition called the *Madonna in Treblinka*), which was inspired by Raphael's painting of the Madonna which Grossman saw in 1955 when it was exhibited at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow before being returned to the Dresden Art Gallery. The story entitled *The road* is memorable too for Vasilij's identification with the hero of the story called Giu, a mule of the Armir, during the Italian campaign in Russia.

Vasilij Semionovitch Grossman was born in 1905 (Ukraine), he trained as a chemical engineer, started writing from his early youth (he was even appreciated by Maxim Gorkij) and was a fervent communist, he volunteered in the Red Army in 1941. For three years he was involved as a war reporter during the siege and the battle of Stalingrad. His correspondence from the war earned him the recognition of “*Hero of the USSR*”. At the Nuremberg trials *The Hell of Treblinka* was used as evidence for the prosecution. He was the first journalist who had access in Berlin during 1945. After demobilization, Grossman began to distance himself from the Soviet regime also due to Stalin's anti-jewish policies from 1949 until 1953. With Ilya Ehrenburg, Grossman wrote *The Black Book: The Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders Throughout the Temporarily-Occupied Regions of the Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland during the War 1941–1945.*, a rich

documentation on the persecution of the Jews in Russia by the SS and Gestapo. This manuscript was published in Russian and in English only fifty years later.

In 1962, after ten years of work Vasilij finally submitted for publication his masterpiece *Life and Fate*, an epic novel of more than eight hundred pages which entitles him to be part of the great authors in Literature, not only in the Russian one. The title, of course, invites comparisons with Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869), which, in my opinion, does not exclude for certain pages the comparison with another great author as Chekhov. Among all the characters that appears in this choral work with many voices, I just remember Sofija Osipovna Levinton, doctor and musician who, during her travel by cattle-truck to Auschwitz, established a tenderly and protective bond with the little David of six years old who was left alone. At the camp, during selection ("*Doctors and surgeons, one step ahead!*") she doesn't reveal to the SS she was a doctor and decides to sacrifice herself in order to be close to David inside the gas chamber and die carrying him in his arms as if he became her son:

«I've become a mother,' she thought.

That was her last thought.

Her heart, however, still had life in it: it contracted, ached and felt pity for all of you, both living and dead; Sofija Osipovna felt a wave of nausea. She pressed David, now a doll, to herself; she became dead, a doll» (Grossman, p. 538).

This powerful text, never redundant, was masterfully translated in Italian by Claudia Zonghetti, who worked on all Grossman's novels translations. These prose excludes what Franco Fortini called "the nostalgia for the original text", in fact Vasilij S. Grossman's painful and powerful words found here in Italy a great voice as the one of Claudia Zonghetti who successfully managed the task.

Finally, we must recall that in 1962 the Committee for State Security (KGB) raided the author's flat and seized many manuscripts such as *Life and Fate* as well as many others (also the typewriter ribbon!). That's why part of the novel was published only in 1980 and in the West and became popular in Russia only in 1989 thanks to the microfilm kept secretly by Andrei Sakharov, physicist and Nobel prize. Vasilij S. Grossman appealed in vain to the Society of Authors and Publishers and went into a deep depression from then on and died in 1964 of stomach cancer. At the end of the war, along with Ilya Ehrenburg he collected documents and testimonies on the extermination of Soviet Jews by the SS. The book, banned in Russia because it gave importance to the Jews as a national entity, was published for the first time in 1995 in the United States. All this matter has been described in detail by John and Carol Garrard and from contributions of many authors gathered by Giovanni Maddalena and Pietro Tosco.

Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin

A further question is about the equivalence between Nazi and Soviet communist experiences. While the first was based on the primacy of the "Aryan race" like the German one of the Führer imposed as the model to which people had to pay obedience and total dedication, Soviet communism was based on the idea of justice for all and job promotion for which a worker was worth for what he did and not for the color of their skin. While Nazism was inherently a violent and aggressive ideology, Communism degenerated into a totalitarian and imperialist ideology.

The three leaders (Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin) have spent rivers of ink trying to analyse their respective psychopathologies and rivers of blood created by their own delusions (Zoja). Therefore, we should highlight the limits of the analogy between Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet gulag: the latter were always based on the work, even if often operated with ruthless rules, while the Nazis camps were often referred to as "extermination" sites.

The average death rate of the Soviet Gulag was 20% whereas the one of the extermination camps 99%. The few survivors were the ones who returned from the labor camps of Auschwitz. With regret I have to refuse the book of an author however admirable as Tzvetan Todorov, that is

Memory as remedy for Evil (2010), which supports the equivalence between Auschwitz and Kolyma. As Donatella Di Cesare writes in her work already mentioned above (see the chapter entitled “*The singularity of Auschwitz*”) the difference between these two realities is in quality, the quantitative aspect is only the consequence of the first.

Memory, Mauro Mancia, René Char

It is known through neuroscience that there exist two types of memory systems, we can distinguish between a short-term (working) memory and a long-term memory (divided in two further types: explicit (or declarative) and implicit (or procedural)).

In addition to these I would like to mention those extreme cases that are so difficult to understand: I think of the “*idiots savants*” or of certain cases of autism, the case described masterfully by Alexander R. Luria in *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book About A Vast Memory*” (1968). He had a long clinical experience (more than thirty years) with a patient with limitless memory and another one with traumatic brain injury published as “*The Man with a Shattered World*” (1987).

Passing from neuropsychopathology to poetry, it comes to my mind the beautiful lines of the poem *Marthe* written by René Char (1907-1988): “*Comment pourrais-je jamais vous oublier puisque je n'ai pas à me souvenir de vous: vous êtes le présent qui s'accumule.*” (p. 260) (“*How could I forget you as I do not have to remember you: you are the present that accumulates.*”) (Char, Vejne).

The explicit memory refers to those memories that can be retrieved and verbalized consciously. It may be selective, episodic in the reconstruction of his autobiography and description of specific events, or it may be semantic and related to facts, knowledge and ability to give meaning to the recollection of early experiences (see my autobiographical fragments of experiences at the beginning of this work).

The implicit memory is connected instead to the experiences without conscious awareness or verbalization. According to Mauro Mancia, it is where the emotional and affective—sometimes traumatic—presymbolic and preverbal experiences of the primary mother–infant relations are stored,

«[...] Those primary emotions deriving from the mother-infant relationship. Such emotions belong to infantile amnesia and cannot be remembered. Some of the child’s primary experiences will be positive and essential for the physical and mental growth of the child. Others may be traumatic: neglect, parental inadequacy or possible mental illness, physical or psychological violence, child abuse, even of a sexual nature, as well as the constant frustrations and disillusionments that lead the child to organize its defences and boost its phantasies. These will form the essence of the implicit memory. As it is formed in the earliest, preverbal and presymbolic stages of life, implicit memory can hold extremely significant information, that may form an unrepressed, unconscious nucleus of the self around which the person’s whole personality is organized. This nucleus will affect the way people relate implicitly to one another. It is an unrepressed form linked to affective and emotional experiences, which are pre-verbal, presymbolic and therefore live outside the realm of consciousness and never surface to the level of linguistic significance» (Mauro Mancia).

Feeling the words. Theodor Reik, Wagner and Hitler

The late Mauro Mancia illustrates these formulations both as training analyst (initially a pupil of Cesare Musatti) and neurophysiologist, Professor of Human Physiology. I remember one of his books entitled *Feeling the words. Resonant archives of the implicit memory and musicality of the transference* (2007). The author dedicates his work “*to the composers and musicians of all times who taught me to “feel the words.*” Mauro Mancia was a music lover and regularly went to La Scala in Milan not only to see concerts.

In an interview he says:

«Listening to music has given me a great sensitivity towards listening. Then I reduced my attention towards the semantics of the words and emphasized my interest focusing on their musicality. This allowed me to acquire a special infra-verbal sensitivity, i.e which is not only related to the things said by the patient, but how things are said by the tone, timbre, volume of the voice and the structure of his language. This musical dimension is important in the transference as these communication elements are the repetition of early mother-child relationship communications that have served as a vehicle for feelings and emotions».

As for as I am concerned, it often happens to me to “feel” internally in different circumstances what the British call “*The haunting melody*” (Theodor Reik, 1953) that stops when I can associate mental contents to it, usually autobiographical. It happens during my work as a Psychoanalytic Therapist and such associations may represent what Reik calls *The analytic response* (1953) referring to the “emotional and intellectual” reaction of the therapist to the “speech, behavior, and appearance” of the patient.

As regard to the question of the violation of music during the totalitarian regimes, it is sufficient to mention the hardships that the great Dimitri Šostakovič had to experience caused by the Stalinist regime or the indescribable actions inflicted to music by the Nazi-fascism: the destruction of the monuments dedicated to Felix Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, the interment at the Theresienstadt camp of many soloists and conductors that even in a concentration camp were able to form orchestras and produce original music before many of them were sent to death in Auschwitz. It is incontrovertible that there was a close relationship between the Wagner family and Hitler, the latter also gave financial support for the new edition of *Parsifal* in Bayreuth. In this regard, see the excellent work of Nicola Montenz, which can be read almost like a novel, whilst being based on an impeccable historical research.

Trauma. Kurt Schneider. Otto Rank. Frederick Leboyer

My first opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of trauma happened when I was a young intern in neuropsychiatry. I once heard Kurt Schneider, an old German academic psychiatrist, using the term “*Leben sinnngesetzlichkeit*” (if I remember it correctly) translated as “sense of continuity of life” (Schneider, 1958). He mentioned this having in mind the case of a mother who had lost a very young son and couldn’t use this “sense of continuity of life”, to overcome the loss, to elaborate the mourning in order to come out of her deep depression. At that time I had an approximate knowledge of Winnicott and none of Masud Khan, Bowlby and so many others. But by then I was at least aware of the possible psychological effects of trauma. Furthermore, I gave importance to what the separation from significant objects involved, following later Bowlby’s Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969-1988).

We may here usefully recall Otto Rank, very complex author who had a relationship with Freud even if sometimes difficult but always marked by mutual respect. About the Rank’s thesis on trauma which is enunciated in the title of his major work (*The trauma of birth*, 1924) comes to my mind Frederick Leboyer, a French obstetrician and gynecologist who, throughout his long life, had theorized and put into practice the so-called “*gentle birthing*” (Leboyer, 1975) with a series of techniques to help the child have a “*gentle birthing*” to limit birth shock, including the delay in cutting a baby’s umbilical cord to allow until the child’s respiration is established. Leboyer (1976) in the framework of a deep connection with India, also developed the massage technique, introducing a particular attention to the physio-psychic contact between mother-baby and named the technique “Shantala” in honour of the name of a lady who practiced this technique in Calcutta, calling it “*A silent dialogue of love between a mother and her baby*”.

Sándor Ferenczi, Sigmund Freud, Luis Martín-Cabrè

I will now introduce some reflections on the thought of a Psychoanalyst with whom I had over the years and believe to still have a mental issue/affair, that I define as essential.

I refer to Sándor Ferenczi, the Hungarian Jew, who died at 59 years old in 1933, that I read in English during my youth (Hogarth Press Edition) and then in Italian in the Guaraldi edition, until a few years ago I had the good fortune to meet Luis Martín Cabré, training psychoanalyst of the Psychoanalytic Society of Madrid and with him transform my past cultural knowledge in a living experience that I could better use in my work.

Luis, since many years is an careful and great scholar of Ferenczi of which he promoted a deeper analysis and study without ending into an uncritical hagiography. The fact remains that usually we talk about “Kleinian”, “Lacanian”, “Bionian”, “Jungian”, sometimes even “Freudian”, but not “Ferenczian”...!

It is known that Sándor Ferenczi, was about fifteen years younger than Freud, with whom he had built a long relationship during his training as a student, a friend and, as far as possible a “patient”. Started in 1908 he ended after several events in 1933 with the death of Ferenczi. This relationship is demonstrated by an extensive correspondence between them, mostly published; just consider that many of Freud's letters begin with “*Dear son...*”.

Today it is acknowledged to Ferenczi a role that goes beyond the one of the thinker, theorist and therapist as he has been one of the top-pioneer, although the oblivion into which it had fallen after his death for envies, jealousies by the colleagues who resented the singularity of the relationship he had with Freud. Comes to my mind the image of a karsic river that reappears to the surface after a long underground journey helped by other springs, (the so-called “resurgences”) bearing the names of Winnicott, Racker, William and Madeleine Baranger, Masud Khan, André Green, Fairbairn, to mention only some among the best known.

Many years ago, if I may quote myself, (Giuganino, 1994) I wrote an historical excursus some ways a little “prehistoric”:

«In the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, there is a unique reference to the Anamnesis (plural) with references to the patient's stories in the clinical cases of hysteria and children early seduction. Here we may open the discussion on Freud's suppression of childhood seduction by adults theory, that is on the transition from its raw etiopathogenesis and often hypothetical medical history, to the analysis of the interweaving of diachronic and chronological mutation of phantasies and perceptions childhood with particular regard to the primal scene: this historical event has been criticised by Masson and was described in detail by Migone (1984). Let us remind that Freud had always affirmed and emphasized the existence of a “nucleus of truth “in the reconstruction of crucial events experienced in early childhood, with particular regard to its visual and acoustic aspects, from the work with Breuer to one of the last at the end of his life (*Constructions in Analysis*, 1937). It appears that the Anamnesis more than denied or repressed, is taken for granted by many authors, beginning with Freud that does not consider it a significant parameter of the therapist-patient relationship that is, particularly in Freud, a relationship between a researcher and his subject-object».

We may say that it is better that the family Anamnesis could emerge from the transference-countertransference interaction, which is deductible by the “speech” that runs through the doctor-patient encounter in which the doctor shouldn't insist on the search of one or more traumas which are mostly ignored by the patient himself.

However in some cases the acquisition of family is or would be essential.

The Schreber case. Edmund Gosse

The *Schreber case* (Freud, 1911) is a paradigmatic work in which Freud, recommended by Jung, made his interpretations and own conclusions after reading a vivid account written by the patient

himself (see *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, 1903). Schreber was a highly respected judge until psychosis occurred, he published at his own expense his memoirs in which he described in great detail his paranoid schizophrenia (his several hospitalization and delusions). It should be noted that Schreber's father was a well-known pedagogue, author of numerous publications including an essay dedicated to the “systematic remedial exercises” to correct pupils postures in school, studying in particular new devices that he used with his own children, the elder son committed suicide and the other one developed, as I already mentioned, paranoid schizophrenia with somatizations attributable to those terrifying devices. These educational books were reprinted forty times, continued to be reprinted after his death and gained a lot of success during Nazism. As far as we know this information did not come nor to Jung or Freud, not even to Professor Flechsig who treated during hospitalization Schreber, but were acquired especially by two other authors: WG Niederland (1951-1965) and M. Schatzman (1973) which provided a new interpretation of *Schreber's case*.

Quite different was the case of Edmund Gosse, an English writer and critic, biographer of Ibsen and other writers, a few years younger than Schreber, who described in his writings the conflict from which he emerged victorious, between his humanistic mentality formed in the atmosphere of the end of the nineteenth century and his father's mentality formed in a Victorian and religious culture (see *Father and son. Story of two temperaments*, 1908, originally published in 1907 anonymously).

Ferenczi and Freud

Returning to the intimate and lasting relationship between Ferenczi and Freud, what strikes most is the constant request of affection by the younger to the revered master, based on a transference of a parent image as a unit with strong maternal connotations that did not end even with Sándor's late wedding. Freud did not understand this transference and fortunately escaped that analysis that was occasionally attempted, during the two daily sessions or along the trips made by them, by these two “giants”. The adverb “fortunately” comes from the question that I have repeatedly mentioned above: if Freud had “treated” Ferenczi, would he have been able to write many of his wonderful contributions as the moving *clinical diary* stopped a few days before his painful end of life at 59 years old?

How would it have been that “*association that made Ferenczi, while physically away, the closest among Freud's students, so hardily that they couldn't distinguish how much one owed to the other*” says Glauco Carloni?

Trauma and Temporality Ferenczi and Martin Cabré

Now, I willingly leave space to Luis Martín Cabré lines about Sándor Ferenczi taken from his work on *The Psychoanalytic Conception of Trauma in Ferenczi and the Question of Temporality*:

«A reciprocal and ongoing interaction about theory and clinical technique developed between Freud and Ferenczi in the years from 1908 to 1933. During the course of this ongoing dialogue, the concept of psychic trauma gradually transformed. Ferenczi continued to elaborate on this issue, and concluded with his work on the interaction of trauma and fantasy. Ferenczi initially refuted Freud's early trauma theses and finally conceptualized a metapsychological reformulation of trauma, an inverse development to Freud's formulations. Ferenczi highlighted two essential concepts in the theory and technique of trauma: the processes of identification and the splitting of the ego, while he stressed the enormous role of disavowal in the dynamics of trauma» (Martin Cabré, 2008).

I am also referring to Luis Martín Cabré's exhaustive chapter “*From fantasy to trauma*” in the book entitled “*Catastrophe and its symbols. Ferenczi's contribution to trauma theory*” (1999) by Carlo Bonomi and Franco Borgogno. Luis makes a thorough review of the connection between

fantasy and trauma and examines the theoretical formulations and treatment for psychic pain in neurotic disorders and possible severe diseases.

Moreover, another work from the same author *Trauma, perversion and temporality* that comes with the complete work on *Trauma, primal traces and transference*, both read in the Study- group held at the Società Italiana di Psicoterapia Psicoanalitica in Rome, in which the author, with admirable clarity, illustrates what Ferenczi found about the devastation caused by adults to children, i.e when to the child's language of tenderness meets the language of passion of the adults, inspired by love, hate and fear.

According to Ferenczi, when a trauma takes place in the child's psyche, the phenomena of splitting may occur internally and may lead to *Autotomy*, which implies that the amputation of a part of oneself by disqualifying and denying thought and affections. The emphasis is given to the child response to trauma through the identification with the aggressor (Frankel). The child introjects what Ferenczi called "*the guilt feelings of the adult*" (1933, p. 162). When the adult refuses to listen and / or talk to his child, this may produce a denial phenomena which stops all introjections and paralyzes thought prohibiting the child use of the word as a representation and fantasy. The words of the child remain "buried alive" (N. Abraham and M. Torok, 1994, Landa,2000).

In short, unlike Freud, Ferenczi believed that both denial and splitting originated not only intrapsychically but also from an intersubjective space.

In 1932, Ferenczi invented the neologism "intropression" in which he tried to articulate the notion of introjections with the devastating effects of violence and parental repression. A term which refers to an essential aspect of psychoanalysis that lies in recognizing up to what point the unconscious part of the superego is likely to be modified and under what conditions.

The effects of *intropression* consist in disqualifying the child's, the patient's and the trainee's thought and affect, denying it recognition and damaging the trust they have in their interpretation of psychic reality (see the work of Luis Martín Cabré on *Introjection and intropression*, 2011).

Another important contribution is Luis Martín Cabré's work on *Empathy and the elasticity of the psychoanalytic technique* where a special importance is given to Ferenczi's use of the concept of *empathy* (linked to "*sympathy*"- feeling with- from greek and "*compassion*"- to suffer together with- from Latin) and its interrelation to countertransference.

Ferenczi masterfully describes the process of "mastering the countertransference", and for the first time, as an essential and useful instrument and not just an obstacle or a problem. Essential are also his observations on "narcissistic countertransference" and "analyst humility", being one of the few analyst who really practiced it.

I conclude by quoting the latest work by Luis Martín Cabré called *The traumatolytic function of dreams* (2012) in which the author reviews Ferenczi's ideas on this topic (1931), demonstrating how the dream interpretation remains a privileged tool of knowledge acquisition and psychic change.

I shall now limit myself to the distinction that Ferenczi made between "secondary dreams" and "primary dream". The first is a pure repetition of trauma whereas the second is an attempt to overcome the trauma by means of a narcissistic split. An illustration is dreaming violently of being chased by wild animals or bandit. The primary dreams are made up of bodily sensations with no psychic content (sense of suffocation, abdominal pain, blank nightmares etc.).

It is, moreover, interesting the hypothesis of the double latent content in dreams. For instance, in addition to the hidden part behind the manifest content which is susceptible to become object of interpretations, there would be another latent content very close to the manifest one, related to early traumatic experiences and not subjected to repression but likely to be evoked in the transference.

While the interpretation of the first type of latent content can be included within the dynamics of temporality, the second one would be outside the chronological, historical time. In trauma "*time has stopped, it is bound in an infinite, limitless and empty present*", but through the dimension of transference/countertransference the recovery of these early traumatic experiences may finally happen. There is no other better way to express the transference than the experience of a dream in which one can see the interweaving of internal objects, the relationship with the analyst and one's affective developmental history.

After this long literature review of the psychopathological aspects and negative effects of trauma in which the encounter with the Thanatos often represents a total defeat, I would like to mention a few cases in which trauma, whether acute (single episode) or chronic (cumulative), has produced both individual and collective positive results in the fields, whether of art and literature or social, humanitarian and religious.

I would like to mention first Primo Levi (“*Stück*” and failed “*Figur*”!) who, till the end of his days, gave a fine example of what means “use of the past”, leaving us his writings as a wonderful heritage for our Italian but also foreign literature.

I remember the day of his tragic death, I was shocked and felt so much pain. Then the sadness followed my journeys for a long time as I understood that also the best can yet retire. I think, among others, to Paul Celan, Hans Chaim Mayer (also known as Jean Amery), Bruno Bettelheim (Bettelheim, 1979; Fisher, 1994).

Edvard Munch, René Magritte, Alberto Burri, Francisco Goya

Edvard Munch, the greatest Norwegian painter and wood-engraver, lived between 1863 and 1944. When he was five, his mother died of tuberculosis, as did Munch's favorite sister Johanne Sophie in 1877. It is impressive the amount and quality of paintings he produced during his youth and maturity, many of which were inspired by these deaths, apart from the four versions of the famous *Scream*, originally entitled *The Scream of Nature*, painted after a severe attack of panic during a walk. Here is a list of some of the names given to these paintings and woodcuts: *The dead mother, The sick child, The death bed, The empty cross, Anxiety, Separation, Death in the sickroom, The smell of death, Dance of Death, Girl and death, Melancholy...* The living woman appears much more rarely and sometimes as a prostitute, sometimes as a sinner (*Jealousy*)... please note that the Nazis labeled Edvard Munch's work as “*entartete*” (degenerate art!).

Another painter who suffered from his mother's death at a young age was René Magritte.

His mother committed suicide by drowning herself when he was only fourteen. Magritte with his dramatic artistic skills offers us always a “hidden” reality or a glimpse to another. René watched her mother's corpse, her face covered by her nightdress, her body naked.

Let us also remember Alberto Burri, an army doctor who was sent to Libya and started painting while he was in a prison camp in USA. He was initially a figurative painter, but then found his inner space making a long series of paintings which represented landscapes of deserts and fires in which he risked his life during war.

And with many others: Francisco Goya y Lucientes, one of the greatest painters of all time and cultures, who frescoed his house (*Deaf man's house*) with hallucinating scenes (*Saturn devouring his child, Duel with Cudgels, the Fates...*). The long series of engravings on *The Disasters of War*, and those on the nuances of sensuality (*The two majas* and the less known *Majas on the balcony*, Metropolitan Museum in New York).

And finally mention Pablo Picasso painting *Guernica* (1937).

Falling out of time: David Grossman

In the literary field, another author very dear to me, by coincidence has Vasilij's same surname. I'm talking about the Israeli writer David Grossman that among the many books he has written, including children's book, stands out *Falling out of time*. (*Nofel michutz lezman, 2014*) in which he tries to illustrate, in a stunning prose, the grief in the aftermath of the death of his young son, who was an Israeli tank-commander, killed during the last day of the conflict in Lebanon. David uses a “polyphonic” narrative with different characters who represent different point of view that are not easy to guess and often contrasting. We have the reticent Net Mender (Woman in Net), the stuttering Midwife, the Cobbler, the Elderly Math Teacher cobbler-midwife, man walking-woman

stayed at home, even the Centaur-writer, town chronicles and more. I read this book over and over and this made me think about the unrepressed unconscious and its “musicality” so well illustrated by Mauro Mancia.

Amos Oz is another great Israeli writer that we have seen previously and who suffered for his mother’s suicide when he was only thirteen, on the eve of his *Bar Mitzvah*. Amos Oz has repeatedly stated that this tragedy has deeply marked his life and his literary production.

Boris Cyrulnik

Boris Cyrulnik, is a French author who is not only a great writer, but also a psychiatrist, ethnologist and university professor. Born in 1937 and being of Jewish origin, he escaped during his travel by train from Drancy to Auschwitz and while his parents were gassed, he was found by a young woman. He grew in an adoptive family chosen by the social services but couldn’t pay his studies because there was no certificate of his parents death to be recognized as an orphan. I consider him a champion of resilience and great ability to overcome trauma succeeding in his job, becoming professor at the University of Toulon-Var. He was involved, among other things, in different studies on Children Adolescents attempted suicide by organizing safe houses to accommodate them.

Here is a quote by Saint Augustine taken from one of Cyrulnik writings that would have been also appropriate at the beginning of my work:

«What now is clear and plain is, that neither things to come nor past are. Nor is it properly said, “there be three times, past, present, and to come”: yet perchance it might be properly said, “there be three times; a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.” For these three do exist in some sort, in the soul, but elsewhere do I not see them; present of things past, memory; present of things present, sight; present of things future, expectation. If thus we be permitted to speak, I see three times, and I confess there are three» (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book xi, 398 AD).

Antonio Machado, Thomas Bernhard

Antonio Machado, was one of the leading poets of the Spanish literary movement (Generation of 98). When he was thirty four he fell in love and married Leonor who was only fifteen but then she got sick with tuberculosis and died at 18 years old, Antonio was devastated and after trying in vain to get infected to follow her in death, he long meditated on suicide. He was saved by his total passion and dedication for poetry thanks to which he left us a splendid literary production (one of his collections is entitled *Soledades*, 1903) and his active commitment to the Republican cause during the Civil War.

Another author that would require a long speech is Thomas Bernhard, Austrian writer from the Netherlands, who wrote in an unmistakable German which however was originated by his traumatic childhood experiences. *Old Masters* is a “long sentence” without a “line break” despite the punctuation, for more than 150 pages.

Siddharta, Giuseppe De Lorenzo, Karl Eugen Neumann

Changing historical time and space, the legend tells us that, the realization of one of the great Eastern theories and teachings began with Siddhartha Gautama’s trauma. He was a thirty years old rich Indian prince when he left his palace where he lived happily married, father of a son and isolated from the rest of the world by the will of the father and aunt, because her mother died giving birth to him. During his trips out of the palace, he talked with his “great charioteer” Channa, who told him about the existence of sickness, poverty, aging, death through the people he met and from

that day on he started living the life of an ascetic and renunciation. After about six years he attained enlightenment. He was 35 years old. Becoming Buddha (“The awakened one”) he continued pilgrimage until he was 80, preaching how to quit the cycle of rebirth, the *samsara*, in order to reach the *nirvana*.

This story is similar for some aspect to that of Francis of Assisi, rich (his mother was a noblewoman from France) and *playboy* who in his early twenties encounters Poverty, as vividly described in a book that I was fortunate to read at the age of sixteen. I am referring to the first edition in 1905 of *India and old Buddhism* written by Giuseppe De Lorenzo which was later followed by other extended editions, up to the fifth in 1926. De Lorenzo (1871-1957) was a Professor of Geology at the University of Naples, humanist and fervent Buddhist, Sanskrit and Pali language expert, familiar with the work of Plato, Shakespeare, Leopardi, Schopenhauer among the many he quoted.

The deep association with Karl Eugen Neumann who knew besides many Indian languages also Italian, gave birth thanks to this “twinning” work to the translation of one hundred fifty-two speeches of the Gotamo Buddho (The Majjhimanikayo) in three volumes of which the last two edited by the De Lorenzo alone due to Neumann's premature death. About these volumes, Giuseppe De Lorenzo told: “*Well, they may come from the sixth century before Christ, but sometimes they seem to belong to the sixth century after Schopenhauer*”.

State violence and forgiveness

Even outside the extermination camps, unfortunately, we have seen entire communities be traumatized by the State violence. I refer to what has been done mainly by the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina, as well as those in Central America, and the difficulty for the survivors to go back to work, often with the help of sensitive therapists: a generalized traumatic situation in which they have been dramatically involved although by saving themselves.

Comes to my mind the children of the *desaparecidos* and their identity problems.

See the excellent work *State violence and Psychoanalysis* (1989) written by Janine Puget, René Kaës and others: a group of psychoanalysts some of which exiled, who shared the need to overcome mentally the terrible things that happened in their country.

Says Maria Mosca, in the review to this paperwork:

«The group of analysts who joined in this attempt – succeeded – making thinkable a tragically traumatic experience, giving us hope for the possibility to break the mortiferous chain. While it is inevitable that remains in the individual and the collective memory a sense of irreducible emptiness, awareness can ensure that history doesn't repeat itself. The author's considerations force us to rethink how an external dramatic reality may compromise the analytical work, but also push us onwards life drive and to consider as central and essential the motivation for understanding, for knowledge, our inalienable inclination» (Mosca).

Thinking about Primo Levi's tragic death and of many other similar events, I wish to make some brief comments on the dynamics related to this author's ability to survive to the Holocaust experience and about the “survivor's feeling of guilt “. This feeling of guilt can lead to suicide, but as noted by Primo Levi (in *The Drowned and the Saved*, 1986) suicides during imprisonment were rare as:

«[...] in the majority of cases, suicide is born from a feeling of guilt that no punishment has attenuated; now, the harshness of imprisonment was perceived as punishment, and the feeling of guilt, (if there is punishment, there must have been a guilt), it was relegated to the background only to re-emerge after the Liberation. In other words, there was no need to punish oneself by suicide because of a (true or presumed) guilt: one was already expiating it by one's daily suffering» (Levi, p. 76).

This also raises the question whether the trauma recovery leads to forgiveness and also under which conditions this may be granted.

Clara Mucci

I will just mention briefly, Clara Mucci, a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst, fellow of the Otto Kernberg Institute at Cornell University in New York. Kernberg wrote the preface to her book *The extreme pain. Trauma from Freud to the Holocaust, Trauma and forgiveness. A psychoanalytic intergenerational perspective*. Chapter III is called “*Surviving the Holocaust. Psychoanalytic Studies of the first, second and third generation*”, in which she examines the transmission of trauma from the first to the second generation with a detailed review of the most significant contributions from US to European authors. Particular attention is given to Peter Fonagy and also Elie Wiesel, who gave us an extremely complex of his experience as a former prisoner.

As Clara Mucci says:

«In other words, suicide is possible only in a moral environment that is still human, an environment that is profoundly bound to the meaning of existence and the possibility of reflecting on that meaning and acting autonomously; whereas to extreme aggression and dehumanisation follows extreme guilt and self-hate or hate for existence» (Mucci, p. 158).

Clara Mucci concludes her book on *Trauma and forgiveness* with this quote from Elie Wiesel which might help us too, the one's who are spared from such despair:

«On the edge of the abyss it is possible to dream of redemption. In the midst of darkness it is possible to offer light and warmth to one's fellow human being. Even in prison, one can be free. Though poisoned by the enemy, words must not be discarded. It depends on us whether they become spears or prayers, whether they carry compassion or curse, whether they arouse respect or disdain, whether they move us to despair or hope.

I belong to a generation that has learned that whatever the question, despair is not the answer.

Thank you» (Wiesel, p. 28).

Vladimir Jankelevitch

About *forgiveness* how may I forget Vladimir Jankelevitch, French philosopher, professor at the Sorbonne, who participated in the Resistance. This author is particularly dear to me for his love for music being a talented pianist and musicologist (see, among others, his works on Debussy and Ravel). His book is entitled “*Forgiveness?*” (English edition, 2005), is a passionate uncompromising speech in response to this question. Jankelevitch wonders against any “*professor of forgiveness*”:

«Just a despair alone of the guilty gives meaning to grace.... When the guilty person is fat, well nourished, prosperous, and takes advantages of the economic miracle, then forgiveness is a sinister joke....Has one ever asked us for forgiveness? Why would we forgive? At least let the victims forgive it» (Jankelevitch, p. 157).

Conclusions: El Alamein, Martha Nussbaum, Albert Camus, Eros and Thanatos

I conclude this paperwork on trauma and memory also considering it as a kind of “logbook”, with a final personal memory in which the horror of war didn't erase the severe beauty of the area.

Twice, during my travels in Egypt I went with my friends to visit El Alamein (“The Two Flags” in Arabic) where there is an ossuary monument which contains the remains of Italian soldiers. It was designed by architect Paolo Caccia Dominioni, who died recently at 96 years old, who had been an officer during the war in Libya and spent many years of his long life identifying, as far as possible, the remains of soldiers, officers and ascaris who died during battle. In particular, the El Alamein battle took place between the Italian and German tanks against the British, Australian, New Zealand ones which were better equipped because their oil tanker ships had unlike the Italian, radars. Which should therefore completes, or even disputes, the pathetic inscription carved on the rock at 111 km from Alexandria, which states: “He missed the luck not the value “.

I remember stopping a moment in front of the walls covered with small gravestones which showed the few bones left which belonged to young victims in their early twenties: about 5,200 plus 232 Libyan Ascari. After many surnames like “Rossi”, Ruspoli di Poggio Suasa, Lieutenant Colonel Marescotti killed in October 24, 1942 with his brother Captain Constantino, killed two days later, both under their thirties.

It was an experience that I can define, according to old terminology, “olotimic” and “si licet parva” reminding of Wilfred Bion experiences with tanks during the first world war. The considerations that he made while fighting, as an officer tank-commander in France, followed him throughout his life.

Years later, I met an author who, along with Daniel Goleman, helped me get a better understanding of this type of experience and interpret its implicit cognitive dimension. I am referring to Martha Nussbaum, whose writings still represent a very important reference which help me understand and better use my *mindset (forma mentis)* with his limitations and capabilities.

Comes to my mind the Shakespeare lines said by Edgar at the end of King Lear’s tragedy:

«The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long».

The El Alamein cemetery of the fallen British and Commonwealth (over 8,000) is close to the Italian one; I remember inscription for the unknown graves: “*A soldier known unto God*” and the special orientation of the Muslims graves facing towards Mecca. The contrast between the deep blue sea and the nuances and shades of brown and yellow dunes which I associate with Albert Camus’s description of the main character last hours of life of the protagonist before being executed by guillotine. In his splendid *L'étranger* he writes: “the tender indifference of the world (“*L’indifference tendre du monde*”, which someone translates with “sweet “rather than “tender “). Likely to what Meursault lived, i.e being a murder against his will. I think of Camus, author of *Reflections on the Guillotine (1957)*, to have been a great author inspired, unlike Sartre, by a moral vision, passionately and actively skeptical far from any ideology and by his childhood on the same coast of El Alamein, as he was born in Algeria.

The German memorial has the shape of a medieval Teutonic castle with red-brown stones, on a hill near the sea; in a yard you see the walls covered by 4,200 gravestones and in its center rises an obelisk supported by four hawks that frame a brief inscription, that says: “Honour life fear death!”. I remember the two verbs used imperatively: *Ehren* (honor) and *Fürchten* (fear). This short sentence seems to best distinguish as best the dialectic relation between Eros and Thanatos as developed by Sigmund Freud after the First World War of which books were burnt in Berlin in May 1933 in front of a crowd cheering enthusiastically. (Freud, 1920).

Ernest Jones writes that Freud commented this event with a smile and said: “*What progress we are making. In the Middle Ages they would have burned me. Now they are content with burning my books*”. He never knew that this *progress* was only an illusion and that ten years later also his

corpse would have been burned, as well as, I might add, just few years after it happened to his four older sisters (Rosi, Dolfi, Marie and Paula) deported from Vienna to an extermination camp.

Apart from my personal memories, I am deeply convinced that Nazism, Fascism and Shoah are for Europe the trauma *par excellence* of the twentieth century for which further generations still carry its wound. Our encounter with the past lies in the active and experienced memory and our involvement should not be merely during the memorial celebration day on our calendar, but be considered as an essential part of our existence.

In this encounter we may find our true Self, and dream of our redemption, also helped by the exhortation of the hebrew ritual: Zakhòr! Remember!

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¹ The surname is a French anagram of the original austrian name *Hans Chaim Mayer*. The author survived from many nazi concentration camps and he preferred to write in french to find-as he wrote- "in a foreign language a true friend".

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