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**Fear and violence, a syndrome of our times?**

**By Dr. Margret Rueffler**

Does the humanity experience a profound change in its attitude toward violence and fear?

I am surrounded daily by friends, relatives, neighbours, who seem powerless to deal with suddenly surfacing inner and outer conflicts. They feel often flooded by images and thoughts of fear and violence. The inner balance needed to deal in a constructive way with these situations seems not accessible and appropriate psychological tools are not readily available..

I see raw violence modeled in news, TV, films, advertisement, music, MTV, internet and video games, which leads to the increase of the adrenalin production and attracts me to the fascination violence exerts. If I allow myself to be pulled into these feelings, I hand over my power to the fear of the violence which will influence my feelings, thoughts and reactions .

As a consequence, violence becomes an accepted a part of everyday life and tolerated as such.

I seem to become powerless in the face of violence. The cutting edge (level of toleration) increases by being exposed, and as the intensity of violence increases, presented in more grueling details, my tolerance level for being exposed to it seems to increase as well.

Maybe I don't want to see it anymore and switch off the TV. However, the images of violence can be so fascinating that I am unable to turn off the TV and I will allow those images to draw me deeper in the the fascination and my adrenaline surge.

Are there alternative approaches for dealing with the exposure to news of brutal violence and the accompanying floods of images?

To become aware of the various masks and forms violence can take and to recognize where I become fascinated with them is a first step. Turning away from it, out of fear and boredom or being numb, does not permit me to explore new ways dealing with it. However, if I become

aware how I am a prisoner trying to move while surrounded by the web of fear and violence, I become conscious how I react in response to it. This includes the seemingly unimportant actions, such as locking everything up, out of fear that a break-in could occur. The power given to the fear and violence, as long as it is unconscious will determine my life's quality. Becoming conscious of it allows me to take steps to regain my power of action and not being controlled by reaction.

Violence takes many forms, from physical violence to emotional and subtle forms- from the suicide terrorist who explodes himself and others, therewith imposing his will on all, to take them into death – to the much more subtle emotional manipulation.

„And if you dont obey, I shall use violence“ threatened the Erlkönig to the youth in the poem of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Violence is, therefore, something which is usually imposed against my will and against the will of a group of people. Unless, of course I myself commit and act of violence and impose my will on others

From a wholistic transpersonal perspective, will and love (lovewill) are the energies which are lifegiving. They give me the power, empower me to live and act in and express myself in this reality. The immeasurable power, for example, which is the foundation of multiplication of the cells an the unborn being, growth of flora and fauna, is lovewill. It creates the miracle „life“. It nourishes my capacity to think, feel and act.

One could possibly define violence then as an impact creating a shock, a violent interference with the flow of life energy, causing it to become rigid and freeze.

Acts of violence disregard life and the human being, and thus interrupt the healthy flow of life and therewith determine the quality of life. An inner attitudde of honoring and

appreciating life is an essential component to live in dynamic, peaceful cooperation with each other and in groups.

Love and will are companions which are expressed through creative action in life..

Violence and the fear of the violence come usually as a package as well. One will stimulate the other. Both have entered our daily lives through the continued attention and focus they are given in the media and the internet .which feed and amplify both.

How is it possible that we allow the increase of violence and fear to be adapted as a normal condition in our present life?

According to the perspective of traditional psychology, fear of existence is at the base of human behavior. The belief to see this as the fundamental human driving force and the general acceptance of this fear, permits the fear of existence to exert its power, to dominate my behavior. My functioning and reacting in everyday reality are more or less subtly based on this all pervading, unconscious fear. The feeling I have to win, I have to be better than the other, otherwise I will not be acknowledged, I can not survive in my job are just a few example how this fear is lived.

A very basic distortion of the force driving my life is thus created. The potential of the flow of my life energy is overlaid by this fear, covered up and becomes invisible. I become identified not with my innate life force but with the fear of life. This then creates the belief fear is the basis of our existence and I surrender my power allowing the fear to control and dominate my attitudes, behavior and reactions.

My inner battles, social anxieties, doubts, the fear to loose what and whom I love, to loose my job, all are a result of this fear conditioning.

Fear and violence can dominate where humans and other living beings allow them to proliferate. They can not exist without repressing my healthy life force.

Life and the life force, therefore, must have been in existence prior to the appearance of the fear. There must be a beginning of fear and violence. Both can not exist unless they can feed off my life energy, my potential, asphyxiate my potential.

A distortion takes place – love will is overlaid by violence and fear. I can no longer perceive what is really underneath. I begin to identify with the fear and believe fear to be my essence. Fear contracts me and renders me rigid. It freezes my life energy and my strength. Fear leads to repression and wars, and they, in turn increase the fear of violence. Politicians fearing they will lose power, use the fear to manipulate in order to keep power. One vivid example is the present politics of the US, using the fear of possible terrorism to manipulate a whole nation into accepting a security organism which restricts personal freedom. The fear of a marriage partner beaten by a spouse, the fear of a child to adapt in order to be loved, all follow the same pattern.

The reaction to the fear of millions of people captivated by the horror of the explosion of the twin towers in New York on 9/11, resulted in the organization of a gigantic security machine, limiting the freedom of each individual. This act of violence by a few created a worldwide reaction of panic. Through the act of these few, masses of people were manipulated into fear and therefore their reactions and behavior were determined by this fear.

Why violence becomes so attractive ?

With the Islamisation and the destruction of Western culture, the goal of the suicide terrorist, the distortion of values, is easily recognizable. (This represents one perspective, there are other motives for terrorism) An idealisation of violence and glorification of one's own death takes place. The lives of victims do not count, and the promise to enter paradise after death holds a powerful attraction. This act is a denial and disrespect for life, one's own as well as that of others, however much the personal reasons leading up to it might differ. Suicide and death are presented as the ideal and the goal sanctifies all violent means. Suicide and

terrorism are modeled as being heroic. To honor and respect life, to work toward a peaceful dynamic cooperation have no room in this limited perspective.

How can one understand the wave of youth violence that takes place in schools, and is directed against oneself and others, against helpless people and senior citizens ? When groups of radicalized youths attack and beat up members of minority groups, foreigners and older citizens? To be violent and beat up defenseless and weaker members of our society seems to produce a high, a adrenalin rush of power. This attitude reflects strong disregard for life. Where is the appreciation for life and for honoring one's own as well as that of the other? In the terrorist's perspective, the violent act sanctifies and idealizes his own death and those of the victims in the name of god. It is an example of the arrogance of being the only one knowing the truth.

Youth violence in the streets, with its physical domination of others and the lust for destruction, show a similar pattern at the community level. Tuning into the group's destructive power as well as peer pressure provide a fertile environment for excluding others, provoking confrontation resulting often in verbal and physical violence. Inclusion, cooperation and affirming life are not part of the world view of these youths. Nor are honoring and respecting life.

Each of these views transforms valuable, creative human potential and life energy into violent and fear-producing action. Each repetition of violence and fear-producing action increases the individual and collective patterns in the human subconscious.

How can the belief in the almighty power of fear and violence be readjusted?

First and foremost I must have the awareness and conscious acceptance of my inherent creative potential, recognition that my life energy and life force are my birthright and violence and fear are a constant drain on that birthright. Violence and fear make me believe that they are at the foundation of my life. Thus, they induce me to surrender my power to determine my life and make choices. Most of this plays itself out without my being aware of it.

I can learn to become aware when I begin to experience fear, to recognize the feeling, turn toward it and look straight at it, to see where and when I react out of fear, how it determines my behavior. It is possible to learn to accept and hold myself with my fears, like one holds a small child in one's arms, loving and protective.

To be able to implement this awareness, I must call upon the qualities and the strength of my heart. If I am capable of holding my fears in a loving embrace, the paralysis can be released and my underlying life-affirming potential reappears and can flow into creative action. My behavior changes and the quality of my everyday life changes and deepens accordingly.

Maybe I need to question whether I should expose myself continuously to all the sensational news flooding my daily life. I can begin to choose to expose myself less. Fear and violence seduce me, fascinate and increase my adrenaline output and thereby trying to keep me in their sphere of influence.

As an alternative I can switch off the news and choose to focus on constructive and life-affirming activities, to read a good book, to feel the earth in the garden, to take a walk in nature, to engage in a community project.

Each time I make this choice, my life energy is guided in a life-affirming action and is no longer available to the fear-violence circuit.

The unconscious behavior of each one of us influences the individual and collective fear patterns.

Observing the huge number of people exposed to the fear of violence and to actual violence in the Iraq war, I can see how these individual fears create a huge common field of fear in which each person is embedded. This perspective allows me to gain an idea of the subtle power of fear and violence, how it penetrates human thoughts and feelings. Being imprisoned in this field, my own fears will reinforce and strengthen it and simultaneously it will influence and increase my personal fears. As collective feelings are amplified, they grow evermore and exert a powerful pull to keep me under the influence.

To align myself with my underlying potential, my life energy, my love will, the affirmation of life influences and reinforces the life giving energy individually and collectively. If I turn my attention to my potential the field fear can no longer feed on my life energy.

Few people are aware of their power of being able to influence the collective, that is others and events. Becoming conscious allows me to choose how to use my influence.

The tool to change this repetitive pattern of fear and violence is my personal conscious resolve to no longer let this pattern be nourished by my feelings and thoughts. This can be my personal contribution to affirm life.

Traumatic natural catastrophes create fear and panic and usually touch large groups of people. Through the many personal traumas and sufferings the collective pattern is reinforced, grows, is amplified. Past experiences and traumatic mass events such as impacts of large meteorites, wars, settle and solidify the shock-violence-fear pattern increasingly in the earth and in the genetic make up of the human being. Its origin is forgotten and hidden deep in the individual and collective unconscious.

Each new war and violence re-activates and reinforces the deeply anchored pattern developed through previous wars. It becomes visible. Here lies the chance to recognize and no longer be its victim.

We insist we do not want violence and war and yet we seem to be incompetent to live peacefully.

To gain a more profound understanding of the influence and of violence and the extent of fear, however unconscious, I can imagine the psyche of humanity to be a huge energetic field, composed of multiple patterns which were built through many repetitions of the same. Each individual, his family, group, nation and humanity as a whole is embedded in this and is influenced by it.

I influence these fields unconsciously. Each time I am infected by the fear, I reinforce this old violence-fear-field and the pattern. My fear pulls me into this field and through this fear I feed the pattern with my focus and energy. In return I receive a good dose from the field which activates my own potential for violence.

Hundreds and thousands of people dying in fear and horror in a Tsunami and the fears and experience of traumas caused by humans, such as wars , suicide bombers, construct an immense collective field of fear, pulling me in while at the same time activating my own fears and tendencies for violence.

This collective fear field influences and determines my actions.

The fear is not limited to the area where the trauma and violence took place. It is like placing my finger in an electrical plug: the field connects immediately with my fears, the collective fields of fear and influences the actions of individuals, groups, nations and humanity as a whole.

Through continuous repetition throughout the history of humanity, these huge fields are charged and reactivated daily and thus influence our actions.

Is there a learning in the encounter with fear and violence? Fear and violence will create more fear and violence. It is a never ending cycle.

Fear and fear of violence either freezes me or leads into aggression. In either case it determines the quality of my life. Fear creates more violence and violence creates more fear. Both are ideal companions feeding on the expense of our true potential, our life energy and lovewill. This cycle is reinforced through repetition and brings death. How can I step out of the cycle?

Violence has something very important to teach me. I have a choice, the choice to say no to it from within and without, no to its fascination with its explosive and death-oriented power. I can choose to turn toward life and affirm it fully.

Thus, I can make a conscious choice, to allow my precious life force to flow into creative and constructive thought and action, to refuse to allow it to be at the disposition of violence and fear any longer.

Violence teaches me to choose consciously to appreciate and honor life.

This conscious choice, to activate my innermost deepest potential of my being, to affirm and align with my life energy and lovewill changes my life. The resulting quality of life allows me to embrace joy and gratitude again.

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