

Ralf Vogt (2024, Berlin: Lehmanns)

A short abstract of Ralph Vogt, ed., *Transgenerational Violence - Why Untreated Trauma Can Lead to Family Tyranny and Social Extremism*. Berlin: Lehmanns, 2024.

Initially the editor of this volume wanted to create an interdisciplinary work on the subject of the transmission of human violence over generations. But he realized soon enough that, when psychologists write about the connection between the psyche and the world, they are accused of "psychologizing." When historians link history with the soul of human beings, the verdict is no better, that is, they "historicize," etc.. These are powerful arguments for being one-sided.

The central concept for the book came together this way: Different disciplines can express themselves on the same subject in supportive cooperation. It seemed possible from this multidimensional-interactive approach to create a concerted understanding that corresponds to complex social problems.

Because the emphasis of the book leans toward the psychoanalytical, psychotraumatological side, the author selected historical, sociological, and social-psychological contributions and accompanied them with comprehensive comments - or at least hypotheses – to attain a theme for the book.

The generally important concern of all selected perspectives is to comprehend how destructiveness, aggression, extremism and forces hindering development are passed on from one generations to the next, even in times of peace. During the last ten years, the political landscape of Europe has slid to the right again, as if we had forgotten from one generation to the next

the lessons of WWII. But the situation after WWI proves that just twenty years sufficed to stir up irrational hatred. We generally understand that economics and politics do not explain the entire framework of a person's judgment and action. Even individual upbringing and trauma become a normalized influence when the context of disorders affects many people, and they then think and act similarly. Or when some individuals in socially sensitive or state-supported positions are in such serious disorder that they act out their disorder because they lack social restraints - like Adolf Hitler did. **The special new topic presented here is the problem of unconscious influences of violence imprinting, which is usually inadequately understood later, i. e., it acts under the radar and aligns human impulse- and gut-controlled behavior.**

Psychologically, we have to realize that the importance of reason and cognitive logic has been greatly overestimated (even though we are celebrating a Kant commemorative year and the Enlightenment in the sense of humanistic education undoubtedly has an important significance). Thus, we are here dealing with **LEARNING-AND-BEING-SHAPED-BY-THE INFLUENCE OF VIOLENCE**. These imprints have a powerful contradictory character that is not seen in positive experiences. In the case of violent imprints, violence **structures develop in victims and perpetrators according to patterns and parallel** to every individual's experience with violence. Sometimes the affected individuals do not even recognize that there is a problem, although they cause considerable damage to themselves and others. In terms of brain physiology, we record basically everything that has happened to us, without being able to switch on value systems or ego boundaries and similar filters. These so-called

INCORPORATED (introjected) **processes** then have an **effect on** many areas of the neuropsychic system, like a computer simulation, which are only noticeable or perceptible as **EMOTIONS, INTUITIONS, ATMOSPHERIC THINKING** (which often contradict the conscious value system of an awake individual).

Here are some examples from everyday life:

- Children are beaten by progressive parents because they have to follow emotional impulses.
- A teenager becomes a left-wing radical because he wants to distance himself from the (Nazi) right-wing parents (and sets cars on fire).
- People have suicidal thoughts and kill themselves because they "forgot" the source of their depression or they do not understand their twisted auto-aggression as a late effect of external aggression (dissociation).
- A pregnant mother secretly drinks alcohol and smokes, although she is looking forward to a "healthy" child.
- Parents do not physically beat their child but raise him/her to be a militant vegetarian who despises and insults others.
- Children cannot distance themselves from their parents' stories about war, so they have to support them and as a consequence develop a dependent identity weakness (and thus follow emotionally manipulating leaders).
- One no longer feels the violent traumatization during one's (forgotten early) childhood, but has many allergies, doctor's visits, sexual problems, high blood pressure, possibly an unexpected cancer diagnosis because one doesn't feel the tattered inside.

- One can't be supportive of the AfD and at the same time vote for the Nazis in the voting booth - and then later lie about it because of being ashamed without feeling guilty.

This spectrum of variations is borrowed from psychotherapeutic practice and could be supplemented by many contradictory constellations, through which psychological background events can be worked out.

The problem is often that the disturbed perpetrators (e.g., parents or any egocentric-narcissistic influencers) do not want to appear for therapy they asked for, or break it off after intense maneuvers, because they have neither pressure from suffering nor a reflective conscience.

For this complicated topic, the book describes theoretical connections for a better psychological understanding and variations in settings for a more effective multimodal therapy. Case studies from the current widespread research with three generations, as well as violence induced transmissions and induced transformations that originated with WWII, show the far-reaching significance of the problem. We call the particularly ruthless, strongly impulse-driven rigid form of mostly trauma-induced control of violence **PERPETRATOR INDUCED**. It is therefore not a "police term," but rather a technical term of modern trauma psychotherapy. Anyone who diminishes the EGO of another, their physical BEING, or hampers or slackens their psychophysical development, acts in a conscious or unconscious perpetrator induction, whether the person is aware of these effects or not.

A qualitative pre- and post-study, and a client's own case report, round out the book.

For motivated persons, severe offender inductions require intensive psychotherapeutic treatment, moderately motivated persons benefit from counseling, psychagogics and normal therapy, and mildly affected persons can be reached through explanations and education. Of course, medial discussions always help. Because of the intransigence and potential for destruction, democracy must clearly defend itself with regulations against such interpersonal abuse and potential dangers.

The political significance of the book is deliberate, that is, it is produced in an interdisciplinary manner to highlight it. We find post-National Socialist forms of violence as direct and indirect variants in East- and West Germany and they can lead to immature re-creation of our historical-man-made catastrophe.

June, 2025

Peter W. Petschauer, PhD., Drhc.,
Professor Emeritus of History, Appalachian State University,
Boone, NC, USA
Author and Poet