

Criminological Explanations of Psychological Trauma and the Criminogenic Process

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ABSTRACT: This article describes the criminogenic process and the social implications of psychological trauma on the victim's behavior. Psychic trauma reflects the unique, devastating, painful experience that the victim is experiencing and cannot escape. Sometimes the consequences of childhood sexual abuse turn into mental trauma and can fundamentally change the victim's perception of social values, forming a devaluing perception of oneself. Out of the desire to get rid of the unbearable guilt complex, the victim who has become a young adult renounces his moral function and objectifies his will within the criminogenic process to satisfy the requirements of uncontrollable destructive impulses (destruction drive). An unusual process of transference takes place, the young adult, a victim of sexual abuse in childhood, discovers in his emotional memory a compulsive admiration for the will to power of the one who abused him. The aggressor is perceived by the traumatized in a distorted way, as an individual who will never know the suffering, because he uses violence and has absolute power over the victim. By passage to the act the victim who has become an aggressor tries to escape the trauma, he tries to get rid of the humiliation.

KEYWORDS: psychic trauma, criminogenic process, homicidal ideation, objectification of the will

Introduction

For the psychologist Franz Ruppert, the word trauma means injury, and when the processes of perception, emotional experience, thinking, memory or imagination are affected and no longer function normally then we have a psychic trauma (Ruppert 2012). A traumatic experience causes a lasting change in body, spirit and soul; the consequences of a traumatic experience never completely disappear (Ruppert 2012). The neural representation of complex lived and imagined events reflects the unique experience of each individual; personal memories provide neural signatures of individual identity when events are reimagined and relived (Anderson, McDermott, Rooks, Heffner, Dodell-Feder, Lin 2020). Memories of pleasant or traumatic experiences can be activated by the brain and relived, by the neural reading of the information that the person activates in mental images; neuroimaging studies of brain activity have identified a central network of neuroanatomical regions that are activated during memory and imagination (Anderson, McDermott, Rooks, Heffner, Dodell-Feder, Lin 2020). These data prove that mental trauma is a real wound, activated neuronally by the activity of the brain. The traumatic experience can cause significant psychological difficulties for a large number of people; a number of psychological difficulties may develop after trauma in some of those who have been exposed; anxiety disorders, depressive reactions, suicidal ideation, alcohol and other abusive substances, obsessive-compulsive disorders, psychotic reactions, aggression (Roberts, Kitchiner, Kenardy, Bisson 2010). As individuals we are authentic, we live and imagine social events differently. The psychic apparatus retains the representations of the world and transforms them into neural representations, each being having its own neural signature of its individual identity. The episodic memory network includes regions of the medial parietal cortex, lower parietal cortex, and medial prefrontal cortex, medial and lateral temporal lobe (Anderson, McDermott, Rooks, Heffner, Dodell-Feder, Lin 2020). The traumatic experience fundamentally changes the life of the victim, who faces difficulties in terms of the perception of his own personality and the perception of the social world. For the victim, the world, as a social experience, seems a very dangerous place, distrust, vulnerability, weakness and loss of control are the feelings that overwhelm her; the consequences of psychological trauma are essential,

vital consequences that negatively transform the victim's life (Ruppert 2012). Trauma, as a thing of the past, can occur suddenly, as a short-lived, devastating event that endangers the victim's life (work and traffic accidents, criminal violence - attempted murder, rape, robbery), but there are traumas that represent events that last longer and repeat, producing feelings of helplessness, abandonment, suffering for the victim, such as torture, mistreatment, sexual and physical abuse (Ruppert 2012). After exposure to exceptional, threatening and horrific events the victim may develop a post-traumatic stress disorder; this mental disorder can occur after a single traumatic event or from prolonged exposure to trauma - sexual abuse in childhood (Bisson 2015). Symptoms in the emotional, behavioral, cognitive and physiological spheres can cause dysfunctions and can disrupt the social activity of the victim; interpersonal relationships, social involvement in the community, productivity, quality of life and health are affected (Yard, McCutcheon 2019). Traumatic events that trigger post-traumatic stress disorder are events that go beyond ordinary life experiences and may include sexual assault, fighting in a war zone, natural disasters (Yard, McCutcheon 2019). Post-traumatic stress disorder is associated with substantial psychiatric comorbidity, an increased risk of suicide, difficulties in integrating into social life and financial problems; patients present with cardiorespiratory, immunological, and gastrointestinal disorders (Bisson 2015). 10% of women and 5% of men are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder and have symptoms such as reliving the traumatic event (nightmare), avoidance of any existential situation or internal and external stimuli that would vitalize the traumatic event, negative thoughts (ruminations), irritability, aggression and insomnia (Yard, McCutcheon 2019).

Criminological aspects

The abused child, a victim of violence (rape, incest, personal injury) suffers in silence and is powerless in the face of the aggressor's attack. Very often the victim is perceived as a weak creature, unprepared to intuit the danger and unable to prevent the criminal will of the perpetrator. His individual unconscious records the pain and his existential state of fear and despair, but all his unconscious records and perceives the will and power of the perpetrator, hatred, violence and satisfaction that the criminal act exerts. The perpetrator appears in the visual and emotional memory of the victim as an all-powerful individual, impossible to avoid, with an intimidating physical force that endangers his life. Brain imaging studies have found that intense emotional experiences stimulate the degree of activity in the left amygdala and improve memory in relation to the emotional intensity of an experience (Canli, Zhao, Brewer, Gabrieli, Cahill 2000).

The affective memory of the victim will deposit in the depths of the unconscious the feeling of hatred towards his own self, towards his own being incapable of opposing, a creature frightened by the criminal act, too weak to initiate the retaliation. The victim will always reproach his weakness, will have low self-esteem, will hate and despise himself because he was not able to face the murderer. In certain situations, in a critical period of personality formation, the perpetrator acquires an oversized dimension and begins to be admired by the confused ego of the victim. Although the traumatic event has died down and some time has passed since the criminal act, the image of the aggressor is temporarily fixed in the layers of memory and can follow the victim in the psychic activity of the individual unconscious (an abysmal area where impulses are formed and repressions and sufferings are closed). The perpetrator, who abused the child victim, later awakens in the young teenager's confused ego a sense of admiration for the dark force of the evil and a sense of disgust for the weak ego of the creature who suffered and was lost forever in the awful world of rumination and psychological trauma. The omnipotent murderer is unconsciously admired, because he has control over the victim's life by force; he decides whether the victim must suffer, whether the victim must die or whether the victim will survive the crime. The child victim will

remember the traumatic social event that will give rise to a devastating emotion, ie a complicated inner sensory event, with repercussions on brain development and consequences in DNA methylation. The child victim will be overwhelmed by the negative emotions of sexual abuse and ill-treatment, will withdraw into his or her own loneliness, and will seek to respond to aggression through self-destructive acts. Submissive and frightened, the victim will consider himself a weak person who deserves his punishment, and sometimes it is possible for the suicidal ideation to materialize the act. Psychic trauma will create suffering, the traumatic social event will produce a neural signature of the individual identity of the victim, because neural fingerprints are unique to the memory of each individual (Anderson, McDermott, Rooks, Heffner, Dodell-Feder, Lin 2020).

Criminal behavior begins to be admired because it becomes an alternative to the powerless attitude of the child victim, an alternative to the weak ego that tends to transform, to accept the will of extrahuman power (Nietzsche 1999) of an aggressive self. From a criminological point of view, through the will to power, the perpetrator wants to exercise the force of the destructive drive, possessing the whole being and corporeality of the victim, obtaining for himself the deep sensory experience of the criminal act. Heidegger in his study of "Nietzsche's metaphysics", considers that "the will to power is an aspiration to the possibility of the exercise of force, an aspiration to the possession of power" (Heidegger, 2005). The perpetrator wants the power to have control over the victim's fate, and at the same time forces the victim to experience the nightmare of the experiences that caused the trauma and ordeal of his existence. The ego affected by the guilt complex represses the memories and feelings of the existential ordeal in order to move away and renounce victimogenic behavior; the weak self wants change and the transfer of forces. The victim inhibits his shyness and moral function, but wants to obtain as compensation - the strength of the abuser who destroyed his life. Thus is born an internal conflict between the destructive drive of the aggressive ego, which wants to meet its immediate physical requirements, which begins to grow to occupy large spaces in the personality of the adolescent or young adult, and the weak resistance of the Superego, the moral psychic court, the one that was not able to protect him from sexual abuse, physical injuries and traumas of the being, victim-child. Self-punitive paranoia requires the abolition of the moral court and forces the Superego to discover himself in the darkness of the abysmal unconscious, because, although he obeyed all the rules, although he did and wanted only good, the child was abused and suffered abuse by the perpetrator. The child victim is considered abandoned because the moral function (guilty of failing to anticipate the evil act), divinity, parents, relatives, school, members of society, all were absent and allowed violence (in psychotherapy sessions the victim blames himself, has a low self-esteem and devalues; no force of good has prevented the perpetrator from attacking the innocent child). Thus takes place the transfer and dissociation of the ego, the innocent child becomes a young adult, a victim of injustice, confused and vulnerable chooses to obtain the absolute power of the one who abused him; the affective memory of the victim kept alive the strength of the omnipotent individual, who cannot be stopped by the instruments of good, obtaining for himself only satisfaction and the desire to subdue and mistreat the victim; in the individual unconscious of the victim the emotions have distorted reality and describe the aggressor as a person who dominates and controls the world through the force and presence of evil. The abused victim will change roles and become an aggressor; he will choose his innocent and vulnerable victims to punish them for their weakness and inability to fight and defend themselves. The perpetrator wants revenge because he actually hates and despises the hypostasis of the child victim of childhood abuse; the criminal Ego is deprived from the censorship of the Superego and wants to satisfy the demands of the instincts of destruction (the death drive) as well as the satisfaction of the will to power of the one who abused him. From an analytical point of view, the criminogenic process is in this situation a transfer process.

Psychoanalytic aspects

Transference the criminal can pour out his anger and hatred on the victim, instead of committing it in a self-destructive way; by committing the criminal act there is also the discharge of the anger of having been abused, which he was never able to express openly during the abuses of childhood (Davies, Frawley 2017). If he had done psychotherapy the open verbalization would have been positive; the patient (dissociated child) would go through a phase of intense mourning after the lost childhood, as well as for the loss of good parents, his parents before abuse, fantasizing compensatory (Davies, Frawley 2017). Freud considers that the symptoms of psychic trauma are remnants of intense emotional feelings, their particular character is explained by the connection with the traumatic scene that caused them, and they are commemorative symbols of traumatic psychic events (Freud 1992). In psychoanalysis the transfer accompanies the exercise of the word, the one who analyzes is the guarantor of a good order of things and can play the role of the healer (Chemama 1997). It is possible that sometimes the perpetrator in a state of sensory and intellectual confusion misjudges the silence, the moment of cataleptic horror of the victim's body as a consent (as an acceptance) screaming, spasm and tears as an accepted violent pleasure, depending on the emotions he lived them as a child victim. By objectifying the criminal will and transposing it into the expressed antisocial behavior, the perpetrator wishes to stop the delirium and suffering caused by the guilt complex, he is unconsciously attracted by the satisfaction of the impulse of punitive destruction; by taking action, he abuses the victim regardless of the moral and social consequences (Tănăsescu 2012).

Psychological aspects

Memories of physical and mental violence create panic attacks and anxiety in the victim. Depersonalization and derealization are very common symptoms of panic attacks and are more common when anxiety symptoms follow a traumatic stressor, as in the case of post-traumatic stress (DSM-IV-TR 2003). The disorder of derealization is characterized by a feeling of detachment or self-alienation, the external world appears strange or unreal, and people are perceived as non-family beings; major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders and personality disorders coexist with depersonalization disorder (DSM-IV-TR 2003). In the criminal's consciousness the delusional system will collapse when the excessive homicidal ideation (as a psychic process of forming the criminal motivation) will move to the act, and thus the criminal will be objectified, that is, it will be expressed behaviorally; the perpetrator looks his enemy in the eye, and by taking action he transforms the persecutor into a victim (Costello 2017). The structure of the paranoid being performed an act of self-punishment (self-punitive paranoia, a term introduced by Jacques Lacan), because the perpetrator feels a state of relief at the time of his capture and conviction; the target of the attack was himself, in order to diminish and destroy the guilt complex (Costello 2017).

The antisocial personality of the perpetrator is manifested by an egocentric and aggressive attitude, emotionally unstable; the world as reality is perceived by the experiential flow as a sensory and intellectual construction of the Ego, the knowing subject, who mentally creates only the representations he needs, rejects the social world and does not accept the needs and social values of others. The criminal idea can also be revealed in the being as a brutal image of the violent act, an image that awakens the sensory will to live with intensity the imagined deed. The image of the criminal act can be stimulated by the appearance in the consciousness of the criminal ego of the visual representation of the vulnerable victim, who does not perceive the danger or anticipate his role in the criminogenic project (Ted Bundy, diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, confessed that he was sometimes stimulated violent pornography, bloody scenes from police magazines and short stories depicting homicide victims; there are serial

killers who have sexual fantasies before conceiving and materializing criminal acts). From a psychoanalytic point of view, the decision to take action is also determined by the lack of self-control of the perpetrator, the destructive drive being much stronger than the censorship of the Supreme, the moral function is missing and any resistance of ethics is exhausted. The perpetrator uses emotional experience, memory and imaginary thinking to construct the experience of violent sexual fantasies or to conceive the scene full of emotional intensity of killing the victim (the case of Joshua Komisarjevsky, a victim of childhood rape, sentenced to death for rape and murder in the Cheshire crimes). The death drive is related to early mental trauma, which tends to recur throughout life; the compulsion to repeat is in principle an instinctive tendency towards the restoration of normal psychic functioning based on primary identification (Salonen 2006).

Philosophical aspects

In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer considers that the blind will (probably created by the impulses of the unconscious), active only in its original essence as blind momentum, unconscious volitional impulse, can intersect in its actions with the actions of the will enlightened by knowledge self); the two forms of will can invade each other's domains in the form of two types of phenomena (Schopenhauer 2019). For Schopenhauer, the will is the thing itself, the intimate content and the universal essence, instead the visible world (the phenomenon) represents the mirror of the will as a manifestation of life; the will and the world coexist and are inseparable. According to Michael Sandel (in *The Moral Side of Murder* 2009) consequentialist moral principles locate morality in the consequences of an act (utilitarianism), and categorical moral reasoning (Kantian moral philosophy) locates morality in certain absolute moral requirements (rights and duties fundamental) regardless of the consequences (Sandel 2009). The lack of moral function creates difficulties for the individual in understanding social values the lack of moral reasoning leads the will of the perpetrator to blindly satisfy the requirements of impulses, without anticipating the immoral consequences and legal effects.

For Jung, the will is a psychological phenomenon in the sphere of the conscious Ego, a psychic energy at the disposal of consciousness; the volitional process is an energetic process, triggered by conscious motivation; culture and moral education influence and condition the will as a psychological phenomenon; will is not a psychic process determined by unconscious motivation (Jung 2004).

Cognitive control refers to the mental processes that allow behavior to vary adaptively depending on current goals; it is multidimensional, and one of its main functions is to restrict or inhibit unwanted but dominant response tendencies (Inzlicht, Bartholow, Hirsh 2015). Cognitive control provides substantial benefits for individuals and society, including the prospective prediction of better health, higher academic performance, reduced substance dependence, improved personal finances, and lower crime rates (Inzlicht, Bartholow and Hirsh 2015). Violence produces antisocial behavioral consequences due to the lack of inhibition of the perpetrator and poor cognitive control. The instinctual and emotional levels have their own dynamic energy, which can trigger a behavior; unlike the former, levels of cognitive and spiritual value, which do not have an energy-efficient substrate, must be supported by the will to trigger behaviors; motivational courts are those forces capable of generating behaviors (Tănăsescu 2018). Psychiatry and forensic medicine describe deviance as a later concept of behavioral and personality disorders or as a symptom of other psychiatric pathologies; this field provides a more complicated description of what deviance is, depending on the individual situational and pathological context (Heghes and Șchiopu 2020).

The sensory event, as a deep emotion (catharsis) that disturbs the criminal ego (the perpetrator is aware that the act is a tragic moment for the victim) is triggered by an opportunity - the presence of the victim or a social event that allows the perpetrator to act. At the

interoceptive level, homicidal ideation awaits the impulse of the social event to develop the genesis of the criminal will (Travaglio - the creative moment of expulsion of the act). The conscious will to perform the criminal act, but dominated by the disturbance of the sensory event (the emotional factor) uses the visceromotor regions of the brain and creates predictions; predictions are necessary concepts in perception construction, physiological regulation, and action guidance (Barrett 2017). In the mind-body interaction one can identify sensory processes as associations between the sense organs and the peripheral stages of the nervous system, while perceptual processes are those associations that take place in the upper floors of the central nervous system; sensations are experiences with simple stimuli, and perceptions are integrations of these sensations (Atkinson 2002). The volitional factor belongs to the conscious criminal ego and is guided by the conscious area of the being, of the psychic apparatus. In the egocentric and aggressive attitude of the perpetrator we also discover the solipsism, as an attitude of his own personality; the world as reality is perceived only as a sensory and intellectual construction of the individual, the knowing subject, who mentally creates only the representations he needs, rejects the social world and does not accept the needs and social values of others. The unconscious is not the second personality, but probably a decentralized summation of psychic processes; under certain conditions the criminal unconscious, dominated by the instinct for destruction and psychotic contents, is able to take over the role of the conscious Ego, the consequences of this transfer being the appearance of confusion and delirium (Jung 2014).

There is a previous state of will of the criminal ready to react to the appearance of the victim. Mental states and physical states interact constantly; when the perpetrator acts - causal chains can be initiated that do not have a sufficient physical history (Popper 2002); by taking action the perpetrator (the appearance of the vulnerable victim, the absence of the protector) - creates the physical causal chain (Popper 2002). David Eagleman claims that the visual system first scans the reality scene. The prefrontal cortex generates signals on the way to the motor cortex, which accurately coordinates muscle contractions - through the trunk, arm, forearm and hand of the perpetrator; by touching the victim (the object targeted by the objectification of the will) the nerves send a lot of information to the brain and psychic apparatus (about the weight of the object, its place in space, temperature) about the victim's confusion and agitation, about the shock of the moment and emotional crisis; information rises to the spinal cord and enters the brain, and at the same time compensatory information descends like a two-way circuit; the whole process is invisible to the mind of the conscious self (Eagleman 2018).

Conclusions

Homicidal ideation intensifies its presence in the intellectual area of the criminal ego; but in order to objectify the criminal will, the thought affected by the influence of sensory perceptions, the thought altered by the experience of the demands of aggressive impulses must move away from the decomposed image of hallucinations and leave the world of violent sexual fantasies. The objectification of the criminal will is part of the criminogenic process, which when activated becomes a representation of the intention and reality of the criminal act. Homicidal ideation can be only a temporary stage in thinking; dysfunction of the orbitofrontal cortex can cause antisocial personality imbalance.

Analyzing the psychic processes of guilt, Professor George Antoniu considers that guilt is a process of consciousness consisting of the intellectual factor, with a significant role in the formation of homicidal ideation, and the volitional factor, very important in the process of taking action. The criminogenic process takes place in consciousness, where the representation of the deed, the result of the criminal action and the existential consequences are analyzed (Antoniou 2006).

The genesis of the criminal will, as production and manifestation of the final act of the reality of the criminal act (volitional factor), is the phase of crime by associating the force of

homicidal ideation (intellectual factor) with the occurrence of sensory event (emotional factor), birth triggered by the victim as part of social event (social factor) and encouraged by the lack of protector of social order (conjuncture, opportunity); the behavioral expression of the will represents the last phase of the criminogenic process.

Freud argues that the victim of childhood sexual abuse is in a confused state of conflict and can turn hatred and repulsion towards the pedophile perpetrator into desire and pleasure; disgust and horror turn into a scene of sexual passivity (Chemama 1997). There are situations when sexual incidents may not have taken place, and in the case of hysterics sexual abuse belongs to the realm of fantasy (Chemama 1997). Loss of innocence is a loss of moral function (loss of childhood due to sexual abuse or mistreatment) can cause a depressive state similar to the loss of a loved one; there is a process by which the perpetrator fights against the reaction of the suffering and despair of the ego decomposed into manic-depressive existential states; it is necessary an intrapsychic work (work of mourning) to overcome the pain of the being encompassed by anxiety and aggression, a detachment from reality and an escape from trauma (Chemama 1997). Metaphorically the minor can be described as a crystal object, which crumbles and cracks after the traumatic event and the cracks may never recover.

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