

CIRCLES IN THE DUST

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These are terrible times. It is hard to know where to begin. Perhaps some lines from Julius Caesar maybe a good starting place. This is Mark Antony speaking over the slain body of Caesar,

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Again today I raise the meek and gentle voice of psychoanalysis against the savagery and carnage of a mad and cruel world. And yet again I plead forgiveness from a wronged and bleeding world, for what have we psychoanalysts to offer, but our puny and hopelessly inadequate understanding?

As he grieves over the body of fallen Caesar, Mark Antony goes on to predict,

A curse shall light upon the limbs of men,
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all parts of (the world);
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war. (1)

This might capture the feelings of many people, living as we presently are amidst great uncertainty. There is a smell war in the air, terror stalks the streets and unnamed shivers grip the spine in paroxysms of fear. In such situations it is typical of us to find a focus of our fear, define it, attack it and destroy it. And true to form we are doing just that. Yet still panic lurks in dusty corners and slips through locked but drafty doors. We cannot keep out a sense of foreboding. Never before have we had such a sense that the enemy is here with us as we look nervously over our shoulders. And perhaps in many ways we are right. The enemy is indeed right here in our midst. Let us try to find him, and rather than fight him or try to flee from him, let us try to come to some understanding with him.

But first I need to explain a few things and explicitly put forward my point of view, otherwise whatever else I have to say, will be utterly incomprehensible. First, it is my view that all human beings are interconnected and interdependent, no matter where they live and no matter how different their lives are. They are intimately connected to us, even if we should find their beliefs and behaviours, alien and bizarre. Much of the time we seem to go about our daily lives as if all that mattered were ourselves, or ourselves and our families or ourselves, our families and our community. Yet whether we like it or not, we are part of one family, one community, one nation, one people. The actions of one affect the lives of others. There are no two fingers of the hand that look alike or function alike, yet they are all intimately parts of one hand. They are totally dependent on each other. Nor is the hand anything apart from the fingers that constitute it.

The second thing I need to explain is that much of this paper was originally written in response to the Taliban's destruction of their Buddhist heritage. World events have moved on since then. Yet the blowing up of the two giant Buddhas now seems a portent for the destruction of the two World Trade Centre towers. It maybe argued that the two events were carried out by two different groups of people and that the one had nothing to do with the other. So I need to remind you of the inter-influence of all human beings and the interconnection of all events. To my mind the WTC towers and the Buddhist sculptures stand for much the same things in the unconscious mind, as I will presently show. If descriptively I speak more about the Buddha images than about the WTC it is partly because of the convoluted gestation of this paper and partly because they better capture the spirit of what I am trying to describe. Psychoanalytically speaking, the two events are very closely related, if not identical and interchangeable.

The third thing that needs to be stated is that I believe there is such a thing as a group mind, which has its own characteristics but which also functions like a single mind. For instance the recent events earlier this year, in Afghanistan could be described as cultural suicide. All aspects of human culture have their origins in the human mind, for that is the only place culture can originate from. If an individual mind can go through a process we call psychotic, so too can the group mind and so too can culture.

The fourth thing I need to make quite explicit is a special view about psychosis. I think the term psychosis covers an enormous and heterogeneous group of disorders. Even what we psychoanalysts come across in our consulting rooms is a vast range of disorders, which for the sake of simplicity we call psychotic. I think it would be fair to say that we don't understand a lot about these disorders, though much has been written about them. For this presentation I will be picking out just one aspect of psychotic thinking. I also wish to make explicit two theses that underlie this presentation. The first thesis is that much neurotic symptomatology and indeed much so-called normal behaviour has a psychotic core. This psychotic core is usually not evident, but it potentially influences all so called neurotic or normal behaviour. The second thesis is that what is mad about psychotic thinking is that it is a form of thinking that turns against the mind of the thinker, as if it were a hated outsider and destroys it. This is not dissimilar to what happens in autoimmune disorders. But unlike autoimmune disorders, the matter doesn't end there. For I think what then happens is that the destroyed mind hates whatever intact functions remain and tries to destroy them too. The more it destroys the more it is devastated by the destruction and the more it is driven to destroy. The process then assumes a similarity to a malignant process, which proliferates at the expense of the mind itself.

Finally I need to say that this paper addresses only a small fraction of what are enormously complex problems. Even this small fraction is addressed rather simplistically. My reasons for this very partial and simplistic treatment that if I didn't select and simplify, I wouldn't know where to begin or what to say. But please don't think that my remarks are in any way exhaustive. Part of this simplification is that I will be talking only about the psychoanalytical significance of the twin WTC towers and the two giant cliff Buddhas, though they are embedded in a matrix of very complex events. Also everyone knows about the World Trade Centre but few would know anything about the Buddha statues that were blown up. So I need to make a brief historical digression.

Historical background of the Buddha

Considering the modern portrayal of Afghans as being fierce unrelenting fighters, it might come as a surprise to some that the ancestors of these people were pacifist and peace loving Buddhists, for almost a thousand years. The entire region of what is now Afghanistan and Kashmir, was a very strong centre for a school of Buddhism, called the Sarvastivadin school. The literal meaning of the name of the school is 'everything-exists' which might indicate the inclusive nature of this school, in contrast with the narrow exclusivity of fundamentalism. "The Sarvastivada was geographically the most widespread and historically the most important among the early schools. Emerging as a distinct movement soon after the Council of Vaisali, it continued to flourish in India long after the disappearance of the Theravada. ... for centuries the school had powerful establishments not only in Central but many parts of South-East Asia. (2) The great Buddhist philosophers Asanga and Vasubandhu both came from Peshawar. Probably the greatest emperor of the region "The Kusana emperor Kanishka 1 (A.D. 78-102) became a patron of Buddhism and of the Sarvastivada school in particular. His empire was centered on Gandhara with the capital at Purusapura and a secondary (winter?) capital at Mathura. ... Kanishka emulated Ashoka in his support for Buddhism and also for his toleration, for his coins display besides the Buddha the gods of Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, and the Greek religion. His reign inaugurated a period of exceptional prosperity for India, following a long period of invasions and wars. (3)

But from a Buddhist and general artistic point of view, probably the greatest significance of the region is its sculptural history. For this is the birthplace of the sculptural depictions of the Buddha. For a long time after the decease of the Buddha, there was no attempt made to depict him as a person. He and the teaching were always depicted symbolically. For instance the Bodhi tree depicted wisdom or enlightenment, a footprint the path and a wheel the endless cycles of life and death. The stupa too was an extremely complex and condensed, symbolic representation of the both the teaching and the person of the Buddha. (See for instance the scholarly work of Adrian Snodgrass.(4) However all this was to change with the invasion of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. For several centuries Greek Bactrian kings ruled the area, the most famous of whom is probably King Menander (Milinda) who has been immortalized by a Buddhist semi-scripture after his name (The Milindapanha). As a result of this Greek influence, Buddhist sculpture was changed forever. The Buddha appeared in human Hellenistic form, with elegant robes and a peaceful expression. This Greek influence resulted in what is now known as the Gandharan school of art. It is from here and Mathura that images of the Buddha first spread all over India and then beyond to all parts of Asia.

So this is the place where the great parents of human civilization, the Eastern and Western met. It is a place of the exquisite melding of European and Indian art.

So this very briefly is the rich culture and unique sculptural heritage, which the Taliban in their search for purity destroyed. I will take up the possible meaning of this destruction a bit later.

The problem of pain

The problem of pain is central to any psychoanalytical formulation. This is so because psychoanalysis is about mind and the human mind is organized around a central core of pain. All our formulations, all our thinking when traced further and further back to their origins inevitably come across many species of pain. Pain waits to be discovered. If pain is so central to the human mind then it stands to reason that our culture, our civilization will also be organized around the problem of pain. Therefore if we are to understand war, suicide, terror and madness we need to understand something about this pain.

The world is full of pain. Mercifully we are unaware of most of it, for we cannot tolerate more than tiny fractions of it. Most of humanity ekes out a pitiful and painful existence, living from meal to meal, from day to day. We worry about the certainty and level of taxes whilst most people worry about the certainty of a short life and the level of a painful death. We are terrified of bombs overseas, whilst whole communities live and grow up in the shadow of bombs. Many of us live secure predictable lives, but the lives of so many are lonely, terrified and miserable. Because we cannot bear too much pain, we tend to blame the sufferers for it. It is their fault and therefore their problem that they suffer the way they do. It has nothing to do with us. We do it economically, we do it culturally and we do it psychoanalytically. Curiously the more secure and affluent we are, the more inured we seem to be to the pain of others. But of course pain persists whether we wish to pay attention to it or not. Now if we are all interconnected and interdependent, as I said at the outset we are, then we cannot be indifferent to the pain of others. It is our pain and we cannot turn our heads away from it. We might try to, but sooner or later we are forced to sit up and pay attention. Revolutions keep happening and acts of terror and desperation keep shattering our serenity. Despite the CIA's involvement in Afghanistan for many years, most Americans apparently hadn't heard of the country let alone know where the hell it was. After 11th September there was a complete sellout of maps in the U.S. that had Afghanistan somewhere on them. Yet the people of Afghanistan have not needed maps to tell them the location of their pain. The Afghan tradition of blood feuds has blossomed to full-scale civil war for decades. The superpowers, the great parents of our world, have helped the Afghan people sow their lands with landmines and plant their fields with poppies. With pain so prevalent, can one blame yearnings for a painless hereafter?

Solutions to the problem of pain

The existence of pain means something is wrong. To signal this fact, it is necessary for the experience of pain to be extremely unpleasant. The unpleasant nature of pain is extremely important for it forces us to not only notice it, but also to do something about it. If we do not do something about it immediately, its sheer persistence will eventually force some kind of action. If pain cannot be relieved it will kill the organism, or it will kill the mind, the culture, the society or the world that suffers it. There is also a hierarchy of pain. Where there is no biological survival, the organism simply dies, and the question of psychological pain and survival doesn't even arise. Likewise where there is no psychological survival, the question of cultural pain and disintegration does not arise. For the individuals concerned are simply insane and incapable of conducting their own affairs. The question of cultural disintegration and suicide occurs only when the physical survival of a powerful group of individuals is assured and when they are not certifiably insane. I will now attempt to describe what I think are some of the mechanisms used to deal with pain. First I will describe mechanisms that could be described as adaptive or coping or neurotic. They are not hard to understand, as they are coherent and have a kind of logical structure to them. Then I will attempt to describe mechanisms that maladaptive and incoherent or psychotic. They are extremely hard to describe, for they make no sense and are probably the residual debris of something terrible that has happened. Needless to say debris is not a very good indicator of the nature of catastrophe. All we can say is that the more fragmented and incoherent the debris, the greater the catastrophe must have been. So this latter description must of necessity be provisional and incomplete.

Coping mechanism or religious fundamentalism

To many people religious fundamentalism is mad and there is nothing that can be called a coping strategy in it. We may feel this way because we find religious fundamentalism so offensive and threatening. However,

it has a certain structure and logic to it that is not very different to our everyday coping methods. Basically religious or political fundamentalism is an attempt of the mind to deal with pain and bring order to chaos. It resolves this confusion and chaos by simplifying things, as far as possible into black and white. White is good, black is bad. It is the bad that is causing us pain. If we preserve the good and get rid of the bad, we will be freed of pain. Our own religious beliefs, because they are the ones we know and are familiar with, must be good. Especially because we know that whatever is ours is necessarily good. Others that we do not know are dangerous and not to be trusted. They are bad and must be eliminated. Not surprisingly the beliefs in religious or political fundamentalism are extremely simple and simplistic. They need to be. It is important for them not to be clouded by complexity and ambiguity. Anything that is conducive to doubt must be carefully avoided. Ambivalence cannot, and will not be tolerated, for black must be clearly separated from white. There is no room for a multiplicity of views, for divergence or for any kind of heterogeneity.

It is this kind of simplistic fundamentalism that destroyed the Buddhist icons, the World Trade Centre and is now working its way through Afghanistan. I would like to say a few words about each.

In Afghanistan, the iconic remnants of Buddhism, were seen as being alien to and a threat to the prevailing culture. Of course idolatry is forbidden in Islam, but no one was worshipping these idols in Afghanistan. Islamic Egypt and Islamic Pakistan have not seen any contradiction in preserving their ancient heritages of the Pharos or the Indus Valley Civilization. It was in part a pursuit of purity that saw to their destruction. There might also have been another significant reason. The mullahs of Afghanistan might have recognized the importance of these sculptures to the world. As I outlined at the beginning, these are amongst the first images of the Buddha to be carved. It is here that Greek sculpture first met with and embraced Indian sculpture. A meeting and melding of two very different cultural traditions. Photographs of Buddha heads in the Kabul museum displayed the exquisite sensitivity of Hellenistic sculpture and the profound peace that has become such a trademark of Buddha imagery. This is a place of moving importance to the rest of the world. Museums from around the world offered to purchase these sculptures. Museums in India and the United States offered to remove the huge cliff face images of the Buddha (35 and 53 meters in height) and reassemble them block by block elsewhere. For a cash strapped country, with millions on the brink of starvation, one would think such an injection of funds would have been very welcome. These pieces were priceless and huge sums could have been paid for them. With the Taliban holding a gun to the heads of these images, these huge sums could easily have been quadrupled, but the answer was still an emphatic no. Why? Could it be that hatred of a world that had long neglected Afghanistan played some part in it? The situation is not dissimilar to what happens sometimes in suicide. Any suicide is extremely complex, but there is often an element of punishment. The victim of the suicide wants to punish the people that love and prize the victim. The act seems to say "I will kill what you love and by that killing bring home to you your lack of love. You killed me a thousand time with your neglect, now I kill what you refuse to love." Hence my thinking of this event as being a cultural suicide. Ironically the world that had long neglected Afghanistan's pain, came begging for mercy and not surprisingly it was spurned.

Hatred, revenge and a demand for recognition might have played major roles in the destruction of the WTC. More than any other structure, the WTC towers stood for the economic prosperity, not only of the United States but of the whole world. The peoples of all nations had offices there and they traded with each other and with the United States of America. They were pluralistic, prosperous and presumably indifferent to the pain of the rest of the world. Pluralism and prosperity are seen as a threat and hence hated by an austere fundamentalism. Indifference to pain is hated by those condemned to lives of unmitigated misery and poverty. No other terrorist act in the history of mankind has so forcefully and savagely drawn the attention of the rest of the world. A world that is now more affluent and perhaps more self satisfied, than it has ever been in the history of mankind.

It is wonderful for our fundamentalist states of mind that we have the person of Bin Laden on which to vent our fear and hatred. Could we imagine what it would be like if there were no such identifiable person? He is an absolute blessing for where would our warships steam to and where could we test our firepower, our cunning and our courage? Suppose there were no Bin Laden, where would we look? Would we ever be able to see a faceless and leprous humanity tugging at our coat sleeves? If our planes didn't roar over the horizon, could we be relied on to hear the groans hundreds of millions that are homeless, hungry and hopeless? Thank God for Bin Laden, the repository of indifferent cruelty, violence, and hatred. By destroying him we will destroy evil and insensitivity to the lives of other people.

Psychotic processes

All that I have said so far makes some kind of sense. It may not be very rational sense and it maybe thought by some to be stupid, narrow minded or perverse. You may or may not agree with it. But no matter what you think, you at least know the arguments, for you can understand them. Everything that I have said so far is comprehensible. Now we must move on to the incomprehensible, the chaotic and the psychotic. This is a very difficult area to explore or explain, because the processes are not amenable to sense or good reason.

When we were talking about religious fundamentalism we talked about the Buddha images being identified as different, alien and bad. Hence it could be felt that the destruction of these images would result in the destruction of bad feelings or the removal of pain. An immediate contradiction seems to arise here, for the Buddha images are strictly speaking very inappropriate. They are appropriate in terms of their 'otherness', in terms of being different, but apart from that they are totally unsuitable as hated objects. They are without exception always depicted as being peaceful, non-violent, accepting, tolerant, forgiving and so on, qualities that are highly inappropriate in a hated and dangerous object. Likewise when one thinks of the bustling and peaceful thoroughfares of the great World Trade Centre, one would think how could it be the object of such enormous hatred. But maybe that is our first clue. It might be that in the neurotic symptoms of splitting and projection, we have our first glimpse of the psychotic core. The reconstructed and speculative story would run something like this –

Afghanistan has a rich cultural and intellectual heritage, most of which has long since been lost. Yet no matter how brash, brazen and bullish the mullahs are, they must have had some sense of something valuable in their midst. Yet despite that dim awareness, they must also have felt that it was inaccessible. They might have known that this heritage was not only valuable and ancient, it was also calm, peaceful, profound and thoughtful. It is a state of mind that is completely alien to the current state of mind that is full of pain, strife and hatred. It is a state of mind that can think, as opposed to the current state, which is confused and fragmented. In the present state of unbearable pain, such a state of mind must not only be longed for, but must be felt to be totally unattainable. So unattainable that it must be felt to mock the current state of confusion, bewilderment and anguish. Therefore it must be destroyed. Peace must be destroyed, calm must be destroyed, thoughtfulness must be destroyed. The madness lies in the fact that this is part of Afghan heritage. It belongs to no one other than them. The very state of mind that is so hated, because it seems to flaunt its inherent invaluable worth, is actually ones own state of mind. A state of mind that is inaccessible, but which is still known to exist, no matter how dimly. The existence of this state of mind is hated because it is unattainable, because it seems to flaunt its capacity to think and find peace and because it is at such enormous variance from the current state of mind. What one is, is hated because it is unbearable. What one could be is hated, because it is felt to be unattainable.

A very similar process underlies the World Trade Centre. For likewise those that destroyed it must have had some sense that it is a part of them, for the WTC, like them, is a part of the world. A world and a prosperity, which is not apart from them, but which is inherently a part of them. Yet this prosperity is felt to be inaccessible and unattainable and it is felt to flaunt its capacity to generate peace and goodwill.

The solution? Set fire to it all. Set fire to this tragic and pathetic mess. Set alight a funeral pyre so high that the very heavens are lit up with the searing pain. Let the darkness burn and splutter in a crimson red for a thousand years. A thousand curses that life should be so unfair and painful. A thousand fires to burn the place of every curse. Burn, blast and destroy the mind that houses such pestilence.

The Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Omar gives us a second clue to these terrible processes. When he learnt of the horror of the world to his proposed destruction of the Buddha images, he said, "We don't understand why everyone is so worried. All we are breaking is stones.(5) He is of course right. They are only stones. Lowly, pathetic stones. But sir, it is stones that make the pyramids. It is stones that line the great wall of China. It is stone mounted on stones that constitute the Taj Mahal. And it is just a stone that is at the center of Mecca marking the central point, the very heart of all Islam. Learned sir, it is out of stones that our culture and civilization is built. It is stones that house our dreams, our aspirations, our knowledge, our love and our worship.

What the psychotic process does is break up the coherent language of discourse and reason. We can no longer sit at a table and reasonably discuss our differences. The very language of communication is destroyed. The psychotic process could say the same about words or ideas. "Why is everybody so worried? All we are breaking is words and ideas." But sir, it is words and ideas that are the building blocks of our culture and our civilization. With them we build the pyramids of our logic, the walls of our reasoning. With

them we build the monuments to our thoughts, our love and our worship. When you tear apart sentences and make a word salad of them, you could say it only words that are being smashed to smithereens. Words are the building blocks of our language, yet they are so small, insignificant and pathetic.

But tell me learned sir, how will subsequent generations come to understand the devastation that has been wrought? With this debris of words, sentences and stones, how will they ever be able to reconstruct the rich world of meaning, that is our heritage? How will they ever be able to put together a mind that had the potential for peace and thought, a mind that could exult in diversity and complexity, a mind that could be joyous, peaceful and generous? How will they ever come to understand that this world we live in has the best chance for peace and prosperity, than ever in the history of the world?

The third and final clue to these terrible events, is another statement from the Taliban. When they were informed that many institutions were prepared to buy and ship the offending artifacts, they are reputed to have said, "We would rather be remembered as the destroyers of statues, rather than as the sellers of them." These are lofty and noble words from the pure lips of the devoted. (Other words that might not be very dissimilar are "Operation Infinite Justice" or "the destruction of Evil".) They seem to express a firmness of faith that transcends such worldly considerations as the poverty, misery and destitution of millions. It is a deliberate and high-minded spurning of any attempt to relieve the material suffering and death from starvation of thousands of families. This is real faith, real devotion. I am reminded of Bion's little fable about the opposition of the scientists and liars, each of whom claim to seek out and express the truth. Some might say Bion's words in the current climate are very prophetic, but I don't think they are. I think they merely express a truth as ancient as the hills. Here are a few excerpts:

The liars showed courage and resolution in their opposition to the scientists who with their pernicious doctrines bid fair to strip every shred of self-deception from their dupes. ... Some, knowing full well the risks they ran, nevertheless laid down their lives in affirmation of lies so that the weak and doubtful would be convinced by the ardour of their conviction of the truth of even the most preposterous statements. ... Even death was denied and the most ingenious arguments were adduced to support obviously ridiculous statements that the dead lived on in bliss. ... These martyrs to untruth were often of humble origin whose very names have perished. ... By laying down their lives they carry the morals of the world on their shoulders. (6)

I do not wish to go into Bion's complex thoughts about truth and lies. I only wish to show how an apparent devotion to truth that transcends the material salvation of millions, is the hallmark of lies, and not of truth. The very loftiness of the morality, suggests that we are in the presence of a corrupt and malignant reasoning where destructiveness and madness masquerade as devotion and sanity.

Reconstruction

From the debris of these few throw away remarks, these scattered stones, I will now try to reconstruct the bustling metropolis. Once it has been so reconstructed, it might be easier to understand the anatomy of these awful events, this suicide of a culture, this murder of prosperity. But I must repeat that the reconstruction of a metropolis from these scattered remnants must of necessity be regarded as speculative and incomplete. Many questions must remain unanswered.

For those of us in regular interaction with wounded minds, it is reasonably clear that though we appear to be distinct and separate individuals, we are actually a conglomeration of persons. There are many parts to our personalities and many of these parts have fairly distinctive identities. Important amongst them are our parents, whom we therefore refer to as our internal parents, to distinguish them from our actual external parents. We are in constant interaction with these internal parents and they are responsible for much that happens within us. When they are in good relationship with each other and with us, we have a state of mental peacefulness or tranquility. When they are at war with each other and with us, we are in a state of considerable turbulence and distress. They are responsible for the intimate functioning of the human mind. For instance, Bion has talked about maternal reverie being incorporated within us as the capacity to think. When our internal mothers are in that state of reverie, we can think. But sometimes things go terribly wrong, for unclear reasons. We have just talked about the hatred of the ancient Buddhas, and the hatred of prosperity. Who are these ancient and prosperous persons but our internal parents? Their very capacity for thoughtful and peaceful reverie, their capacity to generate and produce, is hated and savagely attacked. (The fact that a large proportion of the Taliban are literally war-orphans, only adds a special poignancy to this internal drama.) It is not very clear how or why this process starts. But once it starts it becomes like nuclear

fission feeding on itself. The internal parents, and the capacity for thought, are hated for their very tranquility and prosperity because it is in such contrast with the pain and poverty that one is experiencing. They are envied, hated and attacked. But the more they are attacked the more the sense of peace and prosperity is lost. The more it is lost, the more their presence is hated and the more it is attacked and decimated and so on. A malignant process that feeds on and destroys the mind, replaces the normal functioning and evolution of the thinking process. Since the very process of thinking is attacked and destroyed, the very mind itself is destroyed, in much the manner of Macbeth's murder of the sleeping Duncan –

Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house; "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more. (7)
Hatred has murdered thought, and therefore the mind shall think no more. The mind will rest no more, reflect in peace no more. Forever will it be persecuted by the fragments of its own murdered thoughts. Forever will it wander in a wilderness of dust and ashes. This is the wanton destruction of a culture, the destruction of the human mind. But of course everything is not destroyed. Pockets of sanity always remain. In time they might one day re-colonize the devastated and scorched landscape. In time they might rehabilitate the crippled mind. But if you witness the landscape as it is, it is a scene of unmitigated disaster, a tragedy of enormous proportions.

But all these events have not just happened somewhere else. They have been happening right here in our midst. When one part of humanity suffers we all suffer, even though we try to distance ourselves from that pain. We say it is has nothing to do with us and it is incomprehensible, for we could never do such terrible things. But I assure you that is never the case. We need to understand that it is our pain, no one else's. No matter how mad, we are but one people, one mind. It is up to us to reclaim that mind and these people, for it is our mind and it is our people. Failure to do so will only result in us being at war with ourselves and a fragmented unnamed terror will stalk us for the remainder of our lives.

Conclusion – Circles in the Dust

I will conclude with a poem by Thich Nath Hanh, a line from which forms the title of this lecture. This poem was written during the terrible civil war of Vietnam, another once virtuous war. But this poem could just as well be about any civil war. It could equally be about the undeclared wars that go on within us. Wars in which parts of ourselves are pitted against other parts. Like any war, they cause enormous internal destruction that decimates the very fabric of everyday life. This devastation is of course within our minds, where the most valuable parts of our minds are attacked and destroyed. Sometimes we destroy what is most valuable within us, our heritage, our culture and occasionally our very decency and civilization. When we do not feel indebted or have any sense of wonder for all the wealth that we have inherited from our ancestors, internal and external, and when we attack and destroy them, then we do indeed destitute ourselves. It is the survivors, the orphaned children, or the remaining pockets of sanity, which silently tell us their poignant story as they wordlessly draw circles in the dust.

I MET YOU IN THE ORPHANAGE YARD

Your sad eyes
Overflowed
With loneliness and pain.
You saw me.
You turned your face away.
Your hands drew circles
In the dusty ground.

O you small ones
Of four or five -
Your life buds already cut off,
Already engulfed
By cruelty, hatred and violence.

Why? Why?

My generation,
My cowardly age,
Must shoulder the blame.

I'll go in a moment,
And you will remain
In the shabby yard.
Your eyes will return
To your familiar yard
And your fingers will draw again
Those small circles
Of pain
In the dusty ground.(8)

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