• CHAPTER III •

# TRAUMA AND GRIEVING AS CHALLENGES FACED BY DECOLONIAL SUBJECTIVATIONS

The twentieth-century totalitarian regimes were the Achilles' heel of the modern Promethean dream. In both political praxis and critical thinking, totalitarian regimes represented the most radical challenge to promoting *life shared in common* globally on a planet severely damaged by social and political violence. After the Holocaust, the Soviet Gulags, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and military dictatorships all over the world, humankind could no longer imagine a viable future under this logic of modern warfare. The modern *polis* was devastated.

With the creation of the United Nations in October 1945, a retaining wall against such planetary violence began to be constructed. However, it was unimaginable that the horrors of the Holocaust would continue lacerating collective consciousness through new and terrible expressions in the second half of the twentieth century. In the new millennium that was soon to begin, the violence of a sharp-jawed monster would continue to spread agony throughout the world. Terrorist attacks during the last decades of the twentieth century—from the ETA in Spain and the IRA in Ireland, to Al-Qaeda and ISIS in several Western and Asian countries—were the "montée aux extrêmes" [escalation of extremes] denounced by René Girard as Satan's insanity, an archetype of fratricidal and sororicidal mimetic desire.

In the context of modernity's crisis after Auschwitz and Hiroshima and Nagasaki, fascism became a sword of Damocles for social sciences and the humanities developed in the West that were in charge of critically reflecting on the possible experience of *life shared in common* for humankind. Hence, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, a diversity of disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and theology developed critical studies to analyze the experience of individuals and communities of *survivors*. After having studied the experience of the survivors of the nuclear catastrophes of Chornobyl in Ukraine and Fukushima in Japan,

Jean-Pierre Dupuy[1]—following in the footsteps of his colleague and friend René Girard—proposed to develop the rationality arising from *enlightened catastrophism* as a principle of responsibility and political action.

Studies on collective trauma, (im)possible grieving after situations of extreme violence, and the (im)possible reconciliation of the survivors with the executioners have thus been the main pillars of rethinking late modern rationality. In effect, both postmodern nihilism and ancestral forms of wisdom pertaining to the original peoples from the perspective of the defeated paradoxically but convergently grasped the exhaustion of modern rationality in its instrumental version. Over decades, both streams of thought had foreseen that suffering and injustice would increase considerably in the world. They prepared to face them with a diversity of strategies, be it political anarchy arising from nihilism or autonomous forms of resistance promoted by the original peoples.

It is for this reason that in the first two chapters of this book, we referred to the *multiple forms of resistance* exercised by the surviving individuals and communities who experience the present moment with dignity, sustained by a hope that faces great obstacles after having brutally confronted the annihilation of the righteous and innocent. In those two chapters, we first heard the voices of the current social movements of systemic victims in Mexico and other lands of the Americas, as well as the thinking that emerged from such different forms of resistance. We then heard the critical voices that accompany this sorrowful journey through lands of horror, rebellion, and resilience, particularly those voices emerging from the epistemologies of the South and critical thinking.

We shall now focus our attentive listening on a second-level discourse. It is a reflection that depends on the *inner experience* of the vulnerable human condition given its finitude, but which has been *violated* by systemic violence. We are moved by the reflective desire to understand the processes of personal and collective subjectivities that continue to be marked by the historical traumas caused by the multiple wars endured by humankind.

We shall thus inquire into the meaning of the trauma and grieving experienced by those who were forced into concentration camps during the twentieth century, including people who have been subjected to forced migrations and refugee camps in our times. We shall explore what trauma and grieving mean to the family members of the disappeared or to those who face with dignity the horror of femicides and hate crimes in an attempt to heal these and so many other *open wounds* inflicted on humankind as a social body.

We shall first describe the path taken by Western thought during the last century. We shall keep in mind that Western political science, philosophy, and theology—which were formulated after Auschwitz—sought ways to face the drama of the *Shoah* or the Holocaust of the Hebrew people caused by the Nazi regime. Some opted for a polemical interpretation that the British thinker Gillian Rose[2] referred to as "Holocaust theology." This reflection pointed to the "ineffable" character of the evil inflicted on the Jewish people. This interpretation underscored the incomprehensible nature of the evil suffered as a phenomenon that is, in itself, incomprehensible. Rose suggested that it was impossible to name it and, consequently, to face it. For the same reason, this "theology" was resigned to the fact that, as humankind, we could only narrate the evil suffered in the hope that this would be enough to avoid its repetition.

Another pathway was followed by the philosophy produced after Hegel and Marx, such as that formulated by Walter Benjamin[3] and Jacques Derrida.[4] These thinkers proposed to take up the category of intersubjective *recognition* as a viable path for societies subjected to extreme violence in order to overcome it in messianic and historical terms. For these authors, the only possible *anticipated* redemption would occur through fragmented political actions, catching glimpses of an uncertain future. In this way, humankind would have to face its inability to deal with the present evil, actions being reduced to a provisional political measure but radically insufficient to defeat evil.

However, in this characteristic debate of late modern thought, the victims themselves with their critical capacity for outrage, rebellion, and resilience, as proposed by the epistemologies of the South, have hardly been heard. At best, twentieth-century Jewish thought had been able to listen to Jewish victims as storytellers, to first of all evidence the evil inflicted by Nazism. Modern Judaism thus sought to redress the evil suffered by the Hebrew people, assisting in the integration of their collective trauma through memory, narratives, and the demand for restorative justice.

However, the history of extermination is not exclusive to the Jewish people. In the second half of the twentieth century, something similar took place in other regions. Facing the history of collective violence produced by a voracious capitalist economic system sustained by political regimes that protect privileged minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, social movements of social, economic, and political resistance began to rise.[5] The system, nonetheless, responded through repression, imprisonment, forced disappearance, and extrajudicial executions.

Within this context, in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, courageous *social resistance* began to grow. It was accompanied by a journalistic narrative, nourished with anthropological monographs and sociological and philosophical studies that describe these different forms of resistance. Its aim was to narrate, describe, and analyze the history of people and communities subjected to dictatorships, the violence of wars of insurrection, and, more recently, the rule of criminal mafias.[6]

Latin American critical thinking has thus been incorporating these narratives as part of an interdisciplinary reflection that already in the twenty-first century thinks about the possibility of reestablishing truth, justice, and democracy in societies shattered due to conditions of *extreme social precarity* caused by dictatorial political regimes with diverse ideologies on the subcontinent.

In order to use the simultaneously attentive and critical sense characterizing decolonial thought to explore this geography of horror and dignity threatened throughout the twentieth century, we shall turn to the psychology of trauma. We shall here collect the ideas that emerged from Jewish and South American survivors—particularly in English-speaking as well as Spanish-speaking countries—who have been accompanied by therapists, social scientists, and spiritual leaders to face their own collective trauma.

This bio-psycho-social approach has been developing fruitful thinking in order to identify the subjectivity mechanisms that have been affected by what is known as "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder"[7] (PSTD), among other factors. This was the initial outcome of the clinical accompaniment to the Jewish victims of the *Shoah*. Specifically, this research focused on the emotions and affect that are involved in the subjectivities of Jews who were confronted with the suffering, torture, and extermination of others like them in Nazi concentration camps.

Analogously, we shall present how the survivors of another collective trauma were affected. In this case, we shall refer to the dictatorship of the Military Junta in Chile, whose victims were imprisoned in secret houses, executed, and disappeared.

A similar bio-psycho-social approach is missing in Mexico in order to address the victims of kidnapping, human trafficking, forced disappearance,[8] and the murder of more than two hundred thousand people between 2006 and 2018. This diffused violence involves a multiplicity of stakeholders: from the municipal, state, and federal police, frequently colluded with criminal mafias and paramilitary groups, to the immigration police in Central America, Mexico, and the United States.

This therapeutic, social, and spiritual challenge forms part of the decolonial thinking that is yet to be developed in Mesoamerica and the epistemic South, so that it can contribute towards caring for the victims of the regional and global necropower wars.

In a second moment, we address the dreadful question of *senseless* horror, in which emptiness, absurdity, and hopelessness are thrust into the lives of surviving individuals and communities. Studies into the philosophy of grieving, inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis and modern hermeneutics—Ricoeur, Blanchot, and Derrida—that developed the question regarding potential meaning amid the painful absence of those who have already been wrested from the community shed light on this issue. In addition, we draw on the contribution made by the Frankfurt School to understand the phenomenon of social trauma as "disregard" for the other within the context of formal European democracies.

All these are certainly Western perspectives that have been criticized by post-colonial discourses given that they remain circumscribed to the Eurocentric experience. We, therefore, address the decolonial perspective that is emerging in the epistemic South in order to see grieving through the lens of critical thinking. Given their deeply symbolic, ritual, and spiritual nature, the original and Afro-descendant peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean experience grieving as part of a process of communion with the dead. As opposed to the belief held by modern logic, for them the dead have not been annihilated, but live in "another realm" and, therefore, it is necessary to remain in communion with them as *ancestors*. Grieving thus is not only experienced as absence in a *tragic* sense, but the world of the dead challenges the living as those who have the unwavering task of remembering, reminiscing, and ritualizing communion with the *ancestors* who have departed, but at the same time remain linked with the community that remembers them.

These decolonial analyses are inspiring new questions about the experience of trauma and can be significant in solving the enigmas of absurdity and meaninglessness in people and communities collectively violated by new forms of social, cultural, and spiritual violence.

We carry forward this purpose with determination, our minds and hearts focused on an uncertain but hopeful present emerging from the surviving victims with resilience and optimism.

Finally, we turn our attention to the attentive listening and critical perspective that emerges from both the Jewish and Christian theologies of trauma and grieving formulated after last century's Holocaust. These theologies represent a significant attempt to find an (im)possible meaning to the death of the innocent, accompanied by the (un)certain response provided by God

and the communities of believers regarding this staggering existential, ethical, political, and spiritual question.

The last section of this chapter enables us to prepare the *flashback* we propose in the fourth chapter of the book, dedicated to the *hopeful grieving* of the early Christian community. A community that faced a collective trauma, like so many others in the tortuous history of humankind. Within the hegemonic context of the *Pax Romana*, this Hebrew minority, as a culturally marginal Galilean group, suffered the practice of Sadducee religious control over its ancestral and pious Judaism in the Temple of Jerusalem.

We must keep in mind that the *Jesuanic* community confronted the horror provoked by the murder "of the unjustly executed righteous man," as Gustavo Gutiérrez remarked a few years ago in Peru, referring to the cross Jesus bore seen through the lens of Liberation Theology. Indeed, Jesus of Nazareth was an itinerant preacher, persecuted by the hegemonic religion of his time, who was later tortured during the day prior to *Shabbat* and was finally murdered outside the wall surrounding Jerusalem, the religious capital of Palestine in the year 30 of the Common Era.

His itinerant preaching community—made up of Galileans who were illiterate fishermen and peasants, in addition to some artisans and women merchants from the Lake Tiberias region—had to learn how to cope with his absence. This Jesuanic community nonetheless had to overcome the guilt it bore for having abandoned their friend and teacher at the time of his torture and execution. That small community of messianic prophecy was orphaned in Galilee in the first century C.E. It was obliged to use a memory strategy, which was accompanied by accounts regarding the significant absence of their crucified leader. During the symbolization and ritualization of the words and works of *Rabbi* Jesus by some women and his closest disciples, this *absence* became a *presence*.

We propose here that the survivors of violence worldwide somehow experience something analogous when they remember their dead.

Only with all the narrative and critical material compiled in the first four chapters shall we be able to formulate the final chapter of this book that is devoted to collecting the experience of recovered dignity and plausible hope for today's contemporary victims.

We shall thus contribute to the collective construction of a praxis and a way of thinking that are apt to achieve the experience of the resurrection as an uprising and messianic anticipation from a *decolonial* perspective: in the "life before death" of global violent history and from the heart of the divine Wisdom the peoples of the earth will continue to be nourished by the different forms of knowledge they receive about caring for life.

In the meantime, let us dwell on the thinking proposed by the humanities of the twentieth century regarding the enigmas of trauma and grieving experienced by those who have survived horror. The language of those surviving individuals and communities is full of questions and rebelliousness but tinged with glimmers of dignity and hope. Such will be the tone that guides our words of hope in a life that, despite violence and horror, "is as strong as death" (Song of Sg. 8:6).

## Trauma as an Experience of Violated Subjectivity, Disturbed Temporality, and Historical Disruption

Within the context of the *systemic* violence[9] experienced by the globalized world, upon analyzing the experiences of social trauma marking the societies in which necropower prevails, it is imperative to take into account phenomenological, psychological, social, political, historical, and spiritual factors. We are referring to experiences such as imprisonment in migrant camps as new expressions of "states of exception," but we also evoke here forced disappearances, femicides, hate crimes, racism, and class discrimination leading to collective trauma.

The interaction of all these factors can offer us an explanatory framework regarding the processes and mechanisms that come into play during a traumatic social event. Only then will it become possible to carry out a timely and relevant intervention dedicated to promoting care for the individuals and communities that have been violated but who now live as survivors and are entitled to the right to reconstruct their wounded dignity in spite of the horror to which they were subjected.

As a specific historical phenomenon, the expression "social trauma" denotes the destructive effects of the rupture of the social body caused by the hegemony of modern instrumental reason over the globalized world. We must, therefore, take into account that, politically speaking, social trauma is the result of a *dysfunction* of life shared in common at a local, regional, and global level. Social trauma is the result of a *technique* applied to generate suffering and death in order to control the population both by direct means of submission, such as depriving them of freedom, inflicting torture, or kidnapping, as well as indirectly, in particular through electronic media such as digital television, social networking, and communication technologies that control the flow of meaning.

It is also necessary to consider social trauma within the intricate structure of modern democracy,[10] understood as a historical and social construct

of life shared in common. Political life is understood here as a historical way of sharing life in common that the peoples develop through production and consumption practices and the exchange of economic, social, and cultural goods. These political practices are mediated by institutions, regulated by strategies, and implemented through modes of producing knowledge and social organization, among other goods that provide each specific political community with an identity.

### *Terrorism: An Illustration of Global Trauma*

Terrorism[11] is an unprecedented example of a social trauma *strategy* on a global scale that modern societies have suffered worldwide amid the context of neoliberal capitalist globalization. The attacks on the Twin Towers in Manhattan on September 11, 2001, are a tragic example of terrorism in the West. However, they were neither the only nor the most devastating terrorist attack. We must not forget, for instance, the numerous terrorist attacks in Africa and Asia against religious and ethnic minorities which altogether have claimed more victims than those who died tragically in the Twin Towers.

The symbolic and media-related logic underlying the power of contemporary terrorist attacks can be explained by how electronic media uses propaganda to promote collective fear. Daniel Ross defines contemporary terrorism as follows:

> a form of political action grounded in the belief that modern audiovisual technologies offer a means by which the apparently weak may become the strong, and specifically in the belief that by exposing audiences to traumatic images, their behaviour can be significantly influenced in a calculable direction.[12]

Inducing fear as a collective control strategy is thus a structural factor of terrorist-provoked trauma.

Like in cases of rape, kidnapping, or other invasions of subjectivity by violent forms of otherness, fundamentalist terrorism of our time includes and goes beyond trauma as a mere individual and family matter.

In both cases, it is an experience of aggression against the physical and emotional integrity of an individual or community, which always carries a social and political dimension that is to be unraveled. Let us not forget the cases of gang rape as a war strategy[13] applied since ancient times by different kinds of political regimes. This way of inflicting collective trauma resorted

to throughout the twentieth century in the conflicts in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Guatemala has been carefully documented in contemporary history.

However, in the case of collective trauma produced by terrorism, technological strategies play an even greater and more decisive role in globally subjecting the population to fear and the perpetrators' manipulation. Terrorists most often appear as a diffused enemy that threatens to carry out an ever-greater destruction that may eventually collapse today's society. Such use of terrorist violence is justified as a means to purify evil, which it seeks to extirpate through lethal attacks without caring whether innocent victims are sacrificed.

## *Open Wounds in Violated Subjectivity*

An additional step must nonetheless be taken in order to understand the implications of social trauma. We understand trauma here, in its *phenomenological* sense,[14] as the violent irruption into *vulnerable* subjectivity that becomes *violated* by an otherness that denies the integrity of human life, constituted by body, dignity, freedom, and awareness. Thus, subjectivity—which is structurally vulnerable due to its relational nature—is also violated by the violent irruption imposed by the other.

Hence, as an experience of negative affectation that destroys human life, both personal and social trauma must be understood in the complexity of how subjectivities and inter-subjectivities are structured at a precise moment in history and in a given cultural context.

A second factor of the phenomenological analysis of personal or collective trauma is the way in which *temporality* is produced by the irruption of an invasive, manipulative, and harmful otherness that affects the integrity and survival of an individual or group. The way in which a subjectivity takes on traumatic experiences creates a conflict between a traumatic past, a painful present, and an unimaginable future. The intrusion of the other as an aggressor generates anxiety, accompanied by psychical dysfunctions that alter the stability of the individual or group.

For this reason, Bernard Stiegler[15]—following Husserl's phenomenology—suggests that psychic trauma denotes the way in which the external world negatively affects subjectivity. This affectation must be understood in its relationship with the *temporality* experienced by human sensitivity. In the context of this affectation, there are 'stereo-typical' experiences corresponding to the affectation of the external world as a lesson of co-existence consti-

tuting a *synchronic* memory of subjectivity. There are other "trauma-typical" experiences that *diachronically* affect subjectivity as a rupture in the experience of a temporality marked by aggression, violence, and suffering. In a few words, the difference between stereotypical and traumatypical experiences lies in experiencing temporality in relation to either the identical or alien aspects of the affectation of otherness in sameness.[16]

*Historicity* is a third structural element of analyzing trauma as a phenomenological experience, in addition to experiencing otherness as a negation of sameness. An experience's dia-chrony or syn-chrony occurs as a construction of intentionality through consciousness. In this sense, Rosen again notes that *stereotypical experience* becomes transformed into *traumatypical experience* inasmuch as subjectivity constructs a "selection" of experiences brought to the present consciousness of subjectivity in an interweaving of images that is called *memory*:

> An experience which is traumatic is one that unleashes a certain amount of this potential, that is, an experience that to a certain degree initiates a change in my organization of the stereotypical and the traumatypical, that is, inaugurates a transformation of who I am.[17]

Hence, the experience-temporality-historicity triad interweaves the different states of subjectivity affected by social trauma. This phenomenological approach helps us to understand the (inter)subjective plot constituted by the trauma *experience*, seen in this case through a phenomenological lens. This interweaving serves to unravel the subjective elements that generate confusion and anxiety during therapeutic accompaniment, with its social, political, and spiritual repercussions, as we shall see below.

### *The Psychology of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

Psychoanalytical and psychological studies about the traumatic experience of twentieth-century Jewish survivors of the Shoah have shed important light on understanding the effects and aftermath on victims and their families.

In addition, the research carried out in Chile with victims of torture and family members of the disappeared—conducted since the 1980s, particularly by the Vicariate of Solidarity pertaining to the Archdiocese of Santiago[18]—describe the sequels that remain in spite of years of psychological treatment, social support, and spiritual counseling that various generations have undergone.

Despite the importance of the (im)possible healing described below, it serves here to review the personality disturbances in trauma survivors reported in modern psychology.

Given that four emotional characteristics are affected by trauma, since the year 2000 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has defined this phenomenon as "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD). This disorder characterizes the individual who suffers a behavioral dysfunction as follows:

> The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events involved death or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.[19]

The assumption underlying this clinical characterization of PTSD is that "survivors differ from other people who have not been exposed to mass atrocities. Prolonged victimization has psychological affectations on the body and mind."[20] Symptoms such as anxiety and depression are the most recurrent, although there are others such as insomnia, weight loss, and hallucinations in a waking state.

Elie Wiesel—one of the most notable authors among the Jewish survivors of the *Shoah*—described this experience of profound helplessness with the following words:

> For the survivor, death is not the problem. Death was an event that occurred every day. We learned to live with death. The problem was getting used to adjusting to life, learning to live. You would have to teach us to live again.[21]

According to the DSM-IV, issued by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the "cardinal symptoms" of PTSD are as follows: (i) reexperiencing the traumatic event through nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucinations in a waking state; (ii) repression of memories of traumatic events; and (iii) a range of emotional disorders, such as insomnia, irritability, fear, anger, inability to concentrate, states of extreme alertness, and disproportionate emotional reactions.[22]

However, this characterization of the PTSD for Holocaust victims must be contextualized in order to allude to the specific situation of Jewish people, as an ethnic and religious minority that was subjugated by Nazism in Europe.

Other peoples have suffered post-traumatic stress under different specific conditions, for example, the survivors of authoritarian political regimes. A specific case is that of the original peoples of Guatemala[23] massacred by the military dictatorship. Another emblematic Latin American case is that of the victims of the dictatorships of the Southern Cone, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.[24] Each of these groups of victims experiences and processes this horror in their own way because of their cultural background, the social fabric in which they live, and the social and political institutions that follow up their recovery.

We shall proceed to focus on the example of the victims under the dictatorship of the Military Junta in Chile, which ruled from 1973 to 1990. The historical context that determines the analysis of the institutions created to follow up this social trauma lies in a socio-political factor. This promoted a specific mode of remembrance and enabled a specific way of treating the social trauma produced by the executions, disappearances, and survival of those who suffered imprisonment and persecution for their political ideas.

In this regard, Chilean researcher Daniela Sepúlveda thus describes the role played by the two commissions that the Chilean State created after the military dictatorship in order to provide follow-up regarding the victims:

Both Commissions responded to institutional solutions to reconstruct the form and magnitude of the innumerable human rights violations committed by the military dictatorship. The Rettig Report was an effort by the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission to quantify the political assassinations that occurred during the period in question. The investigation was submitted in 1991, accounting for 2,279 people whose death was caused by the regime (between 1973 and 1990), of which 1,115 deaths were due to a direct violation of their human rights, and 164 were victims of political violence. The Valech Commission ventured into a much more ambitious effort: to account for the exact identity of the people who survived periods of imprisonment, torture, and violation of their rights through narrating the lived experience, leading to more than 35,000 testimonies that were partially communicated in 2004.[25]

Both Chilean commissions formed part of a painful process of national reconciliation that was jointly promoted by the Chilean society and government in the period following the military dictatorship. This process, however, was interrupted by political negotiations with the perpetrators for the sake of achieving a "national reconciliation" amnesty. Although these commissions were valuable for the proposal of transitional justice, they were constrained by the political negotiation process of the post-dictatorship period.

The horizon of that national reconciliation contemplated reparation for the damages suffered by the victims and their survivors, as well as a policy to "control" the collective memory of this social trauma. However, the refusal to bring the perpetrators to court kept the wound open:

> How does Chile intend to overcome the trauma produced by torture and human rights violations, when the ratification of [the sentence issued by] the International Criminal Court, was conditioned by demanding that the crimes committed between 1973 and 1990 not be investigated?[26]

The historical lesson learned from the Chilean process of remembering social trauma lies, in our opinion, in the ethical-political postulate that "without truth, there can be no justice," nor reparation, nor any reconciliation rooted in the collective memory of a people. It will even be less possible for victims to gain access to the horizon of forgiveness and, even less, to be able to forget.

Therapy was another way of treating social trauma in Chile. Elizabeth Lira Kornfeld is an expert in providing attention to the victims of the Chilean military dictatorship, given that since she was a young student, she participated in the Vicariate of Solidarity of the Archdiocese of Santiago de Chile. She is currently a researcher at the Alberto Hurtado University and the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, as well as a consultant to Chilean civil society organizations. Her academic and social career was recognized by the democratic Chilean State by granting her the 2017 National Humanities and Social Sciences Award.

Elizabeth Lira's therapeutic research identifies at least three types of survivors: victims of torture, execution survivors, and family members of the forcibly disappeared. Lira has reported that after three generations of survivors, the grandchildren of the disappeared continue to experience the trauma of their unresolved orphanhood because they do not know what happened to their absent grandfather or grandmother. Despite the fact that ethically and therapeutically speaking, *remembering* was an imperative that sought to reconstruct the social fabric in Chile, the effects on the second and third generations were unexpected:

> Throughout the dictatorship, victims found it important to "remember" and "keep memories alive." "Never forget" was their ongoing response, forged from a visceral loyalty to their murdered family members, their projects, and their hopes, to the proposal to forget that the regime expressed

> in its everyday discourse. Narrating what had occurred, seeking the truth at times provided a ritual effect of relief precisely because "my account will be preserved as something external to me, regardless of my memories" and then "I might perhaps be able to forget" or, at least, "I would be free of the commitment to have to remember on an ongoing basis."[27]

Hence, the clinically oriented therapeutic work, which was conducted in the years following the military dictatorship aimed at caring for the victims, was later linked to a social need for justice. However, in therapeutic practice, it was essential to differentiate between the clinical narrative, the testimony aimed at seeking justice, and the written memory as part of an essential cultural heritage for the future Chile:

> [...] the testimony presented in the therapeutic space resembles in many ways the life stories and other personal accounts pertaining to oral history, clinical history, and judicial testimony. It nonetheless has important methodological differences related to its specific purpose: to alleviate the suffering that afflicts the patient and allow them to resume the course of their life as protagonists and go beyond the condition of being a victim.[28]

The intersections between one methodological tool and another formed part of the national reconciliation that was sought both by Chilean civil society and the State. However, it was always necessary to keep them separate: using one tool as part of the therapeutic process and the other as a valuable element for the socio-political process of the truth commissions.

What was novel was the social awareness that, sooner or later, this personal healing process would have a social impact on the transitional justice that was sought:

> The possibility of using a testimony in a lawsuit with legal value was of great importance in the therapeutic process. In this way, the hostility experienced by the victim upon being subjected to degrading and inhuman treatment would thus be legally and judicially channeled toward "doing justice," "putting things in their place."[29]

The two cases outlined here—that of survivors of the Jewish *Shoah* and that of survivors of the Chilean military dictatorship—account for the complexity of social trauma in each historical context. They also warn us about the need to differentiate the clinical process from the social process of pro-

moting the right to truth and justice. Although these two cases are intimately associated, it is necessary to keep them in their own sphere in order to be able to repair the damage as much as possible, focusing first on personal integrity and subsequently on the wounded social fabric.

### *From Traumatic Stress Prophylaxis to Transitional Justice*

Given the personal and social trauma suffered by the victims of wars, extermination, political repression, and terrorism—described here as contemporary emblematic examples of the ancestral violence that humankind has known since its origins—it is now necessary to consider the ways, strategies, procedures, and processes through which societies seek to heal these open wounds.

In the previous section, we already pointed out the PTSD symptoms, focusing on the subjectivity disturbed by the violence of Nazi concentration camps. We noted how, in the case of the victims of the Chilean military dictatorship, as well as the social concern for them that prevailed, specialized clinical care was also essential to help them overcome personal trauma.

In both cases, the capacity to *remember* what happened was an essential aspect of the therapeutic treatment. The affected individual or community was thus able to reconstruct their fragmented subjectivity through narration. A story can often be repressed by the unconscious mind or even manipulated by the social context imposed by the executioner, as is the case of political amnesty. The power of words is linked to *memory* as that dimension of the intelligence of bringing what was experienced to the present in order to release the person through the memory that constructs a meaningful narrative amid the horror.

However, as Paul Ricoeur has already forewarned,[30] both therapeutic work and philosophical analysis must take into account memory's *dysfunctionalities*. These dysfunctionalities are expressed psychologically as *amnesia* when the victim finds it impossible to remember due to the impact of the trauma experienced that continues to keep the memories repressed in order to avoid further damage. Socio-politically, *amnesty* can be considered another dysfunction of memory. When amnesty is granted, a human collective is forced by the dominant political power to forget or, at least is forbidden to publicly express what they remember for the sake of a supposed reconciliation between victims and executioners in order to achieve an illusory national reconciliation.

The victims' experiences narrated in this text enable us to understand that narrating stories[31] is the first way of reconstructing memory and is, therefore, one of the first steps towards healing and emancipating subjectivity. Indeed, the passage from amnesia to memory opens up the possibility of resolving the internal conflict of those victims who cannot or do not wish to re-experience a violent past.

However, paraphrasing Paul Ricoeur, in situations of extreme violence, narrating stories is also a political act: "Either we tell stories, or we count corpses."

It is thus necessary to link narrative-based therapeutic practice with the social and political narrative that, among other instances, has been expressed throughout the twentieth century through the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Peru[32] and South Africa,[33] with variations in Guatemala, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia.

Although the hegemonic political use of these social institutions—recurrently used in the twentieth century in contexts of civil war, military, or partisan dictatorship—it is necessary to remember that it is one of the few institutional strategies relevant to what Susan Rose called "sufficient justice" in Canada and Reyes Mate referred to, with greater political sharpness, as "transitional justice," in Spain.

Within this logic, the narrative—as a principle of the reconstitution of personal and collective memory—requires a future moment to achieve a possible national reconciliation. It consists of repairing the damage, either through trauma resolution therapies, or through trials that bring the perpetrators to court or, even, through restitution of property stolen by the executioners.

In the first case, the action to be taken consists of providing victims with medical, psychological, and psychiatric resources so that they can recover their emotional stability to balance everyday life with a certain serenity, as well as a capacity to communicate with their family and social environment. One of the specialists in the therapeutic treatment for victims of the *Shoah* thus described this process:

> It is important to refer survivors to medical services in order to have their state of health examined since post-traumatic symptoms may appear. This is especially important for survivors who were never examined by medical personnel. Some medical conditions could explain the symptoms. For example, thyroid problems, urinary tract infections, reactions to medication, or vitamin deficiency can lead to confusion. Signs of dementia (such as sudden personality shifts, the inability to concentrate,

> loss of memory, loss of interest, and social isolation, for instance) may be indicative of post-traumatic syndrome in survivors.[34]

In addition, in the last twenty years, neuroscience has helped to achieve a better understanding of the neural connections causing post-traumatic stress in victims and the way in which neurobiology could help victims recover.

The first thing that neural studies confirm is that the limbic system is affected by a traumatic event:

> When the brain is confronted with a traumatic life-threatening event, the limbic system (hypothalamus, hippocampus, amygdala, and other parts), as well as the sympathetic nervous system secrete hormones that prepare the body for a fight for survival. A number of physiological responses take place in the body: muscles become tense, the heart races, blood pressure rises, breathing speeds up, sight and hearing sharpen, and the adrenaline glands secrete hormones providing energy for a response. All of this prepares the body to respond to a traumatic event. However, when the threat is perceived as extreme or protracted, and it is not possible to flee, a third reaction occurs that is described as a freeze response or "imminent death," which prepares the body to feel less pain when faced with near death (Rothschild 2000:11).[35]

Given these neurological discoveries, when a person survives, psychological therapy must be accompanied by a medical assessment so that the action to be taken can include a possible reconstruction of the neural connections damaged by trauma.

This has also been confirmed by neuroscientific studies with patients recovering from PTSD. In particular, it has been documented that, among other factors, *empathy*, understood as a network of mutual help among family and social relationships, helps to reconnect the neural network. Dan Siegel, an expert in interpersonal neurobiology, states that "the structure of our neural architecture reveals that we need connections with other people to perceive balance and develop well-being."[36] His research has focused on analyzing *mirror neurons* as agents of neural empathy capable of contributing to PSTD healing therapy since they enable the generation of new synaptic connections in the neural network. The studies of mirror neurons have confirmed René Girard's extraordinary anthropological discovery of the *double bind* within mimetic desire, i.e., as imitating the desire of the other within desire's triangular structure that generates reciprocities that can be either violent or peaceful.

However, we must keep in mind that therapeutic care and neuroscientific analysis are not an end in themselves but rather are tools for healing survivors who have experienced social trauma. According to Aaron Antonovsky's hypothesis formulated in 1993, the ultimate goal is for victims suffering post-traumatic stress to achieve *comprehensive health*:

> through integrating resources such as individual identity, intelligence/knowledge, social bonds, a sense of control, material goods, cultural stability, shared values and beliefs, genetic predispositions, and a sense of coherence.[37]

To summarize, social trauma therapy involves a lengthy process of physiological, neurological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual convalescence that includes the individual and their environment. Thus arises the crucial psychological concept of *resilience* as "the ability of a person, group or community, 'to overcome adversity through a variety of adaptive behaviors'."[38]

Finally, as part of this model of comprehensive therapy developed for victims of the *Shoah*, PTSD research proposes to integrate the *vulnerability-resilience* dyad as a horizon of interdisciplinary intervention. Within this field of reconstructing violated subjectivity—from physiological symptoms to emotions and socialization skills—survivors have been able to integrate their vulnerability as part of a therapeutic healing process that enables them to live with *resilience* while their neural networks reintegrate through networks of social empathy.

As for the victims of the military dictatorships in the twentieth century—such as the aforementioned victims of the Chilean dictatorship—therapy includes in particular psychological, medical, and social care, without yet including the contribution made by neuroscience.

In particular, it is worth highlighting the central role played by the demand for justice as part of the process of reconstructing the personal and social life that was damaged by the trauma of torture, the disappearance of detainees, or the politically motivated executions of citizens. All these acts of social repression were conducted by the Chilean Military Junta throughout seventeen years. Elizabeth Lira has described her therapeutic experience in the in-depth interrelationship between personal therapy and social justice as follows:

> The possibility of using a legally valid testimony when filing a complaint acquired great importance in the therapeutic process. The hostility experienced by the victim upon being subjected to degrading and

> inhuman treatment was thus channeled towards "having justice administered", "setting things right" in the legal and judicial routes. It was through these stories that people beyond the circle of those affected, found out who were the people who had been persecuted and what had happened to them. It was a first-person account, simple, descriptive, even anecdotal. It gave an account of what had been experienced in such a way that enabled the reader or the listener to identify with the emotions communicated through the testimony. In some cases, the data provided made it possible to identify the person and their circumstances, but in other cases, the details and places had been changed in order to protect the individual's identity. Except for the complaints submitted to the United Nations and the courts, until 1984, testimonies were almost always disseminated using pseudonyms. In most cases, the dissemination of the testimonies was carried out by "witnesses" and there remains no record that would allow us to identify in detail where they had been disseminated and the impact they had.[39]

Note the emphasis that Lira places on the social and political meaning of psychological therapy since it highlights the importance of recovering the victims' self-esteem through their demand for justice. However, at the same time, these accounts fostered empathy with other prisoners and thus paved the way to intersubjectivity:

> Some former detainees stated that in prison, among the comrades who had suffered the same situation, there had been spontaneous deep communication about the horror they had suffered, and that the understanding and welcoming capacity of the other had been a relief. Seen from this perspective, the testimony was not only a text that had helped to reconstruct their own history, or a record of the past, but could also be used to vindicate the value of their political commitment, their social struggle and participation in political parties and unions before the dictatorship, as well as to identify themselves as someone who had been persecuted for these reasons.[40]

It is imperative to appreciate the primary need to promote personal therapy for victims. However, integrating these memories and testimonies into the communal and social fabric is an indispensable correlate for the reconstitution of the social fabric in order to achieve a certain degree of personal and collective healing.

The narratives are thus tied into a complex memory-based process, nourished by the yearning for justice. In their personal therapeutic processes, collective memory is reconstructed with the survivors' narrative of the events. In a chain of intersubjective reconstruction of meaning, these narratives can serve to draft judicial testimonies and their subsequent use in national and international processes.

The political awareness experienced in Latin America has served to analyze and resolve the social trauma caused by global violence and helps to understand the possibility of re-membering a dismembered social body.

## From (Im)possible and (Un)certain Intimate Grieving to Symbolic and Social Subjectivation

Since we are all survivors of some kind of structural, mimetic, or systemic violence, we are called to learn how to engage in the remembrance of the dead.

Paul Ricoeur, the great hermeneut who formulated the notion of *happy memory*,[41] described his philosophical work as a philosophy of the will. He expressed, with crystal clarity, the deep meaning of psychoanalytic grieving that presided over his work: to leave behind the desire for one's own survival as a mirage of the ego from which it is necessary to wake up.[42] In this context, Ricoeur confessed his faith in the resurrection of the dead as a human and divine gift, rather than a selfish need for survival. He thus postulated the desire that those surviving us, together with God as the source of life, remember us. In that same train of thought, Ricoeur considered himself a double survivor: having survived a concentration camp and the suicide of his son. He experienced both grieving processes directly, being pushed beyond himself, in a painful but liberating process of memories that led him to reconstruct himself as an individual after the traumas he had suffered.

However, these personal and family traumas enabled him to *think* about history through a different lens, with an acute critical and phenomenological perspective, using what he called an "economy of givenness" to catch a glimpse of the possibility of *forgetting* as a horizon of forgiveness that has never been fully fulfilled in history, although it has always been longed for:

> A third clue can be explored: that of forgetting, which would no longer be neither strategy nor work, but rather carefree forgetting (*désoeuvré*). It would go beyond memory, not as a remembrance of what is to come, nor as a memorization of "savoir-faire," nor as a commemoration of our identity's foundational events, but of an attentive propensity that is set

> up to stay. [...] Would there not be a higher form of forgetfulness, as a disposition and way of being in the world, which would be carelessness, or rather a lack of worrying?[43]

Inspired by Ricoeur's powerful testimony, here we shall explore the meaning of the grieving that is possible for those of us who live on the other side of the shipwrecked modern ego. We shall first explore how Freud, a nineteenth-century master of suspicion, described the grieving process. Then, we shall briefly review two reactions to the Freudian interpretation of grieving, such as that made by his colleague Lacan, and finally include the feminist anti-patriarchal critique. With all these interpretations, we shall attempt to recover the meaning of "vulnerable and violated" subjectivity that emerges with the loss of those we love, of those who have already departed or have been snatched away from us. We shall evoke grieving as an inevitably difficult and complex process of memory and narrative that allows us to catch a glimpse, without naivety, into the theologal hope in the resurrection of the dead.

Because of the central role played by the individual subject, this initial psychoanalytic moment is typically Western. The community—that always embraces and inevitably sheds light on each new beginning at various stages of life in which we seek to know who we are—is hardly present. However, it enables us to achieve a better understanding of the *subjective* depth of the religious rite of giving the dead to the earth, a tradition kept alive by the original peoples of the Americas, as an alternative epistemology of absence-presence.

Indeed, these funeral rites are imprinted by the symbolism of returning the deceased to Mother Earth who then create a new link with the community as ancestors. The community thus commemorates the entry into the unending cycle of life with funerary symbols and celebrations, a ritual remembrance carried out by us, the survivors, that promises life here and now.

These two perspectives of grieving—the Western psychoanalytic interpretation and the ancestral symbolic ritual—enable us to attain a clearer understanding of the meaning of the resurrection from the perspective of the "life before death" that we shall develop in the last chapter of this book.

To address the modern issue of loved ones' loss, we now propose to differentiate three stages of the psychoanalytic interpretation of grieving: first, Freud's perspective, followed by Lacan's interpretation, concluding with a Latin American critique represented by the school of Tucumán, in Argentina, with a marked social and decolonial accent.

## *The Freudian Meaning of Grieving: Modern Subjectivity Under Suspicion*

We shall now approach the trauma of grieving as an experience of losing a loved one through the Freudian psychoanalytic lens that, for better or for worse, has marked twentieth-century psychology. Some streams of psychoanalytic thinking, such as Lacan's, favor this interpretation, providing greater depth to Freud's intuitions. Others, however, dismantled this interpretation of trauma using the notion of libido to seek other perspectives through which to analyze subjectivity.

More than a hundred years ago, in 1918, Sigmund Freud published in Vienna his famous essay *Trauer und Melancholia* (*Mourning and Melancholy*) in a journal he directed, the *Internationale Zeitschrift* für Ärztliche *Psychoanalyse*.[44] In that text, Freud not only "objectively" referred to the symptoms of trauma and melancholy—in the sense that is now given to the term 'depression'—in patients that he had seen in his office. However, we now know that precisely during those years Freud had experienced an acute sense of loss. In a sense, we could say that he had learned to speak the language of a survivor. His two eldest sons, as well as two of his closest colleagues, had left for the war front in 1915, during the First Great European War of the twentieth century.[45]

In that psychoanalytic research article, Freud analyzed grieving in its relation to the construction of subjectivity through the libido. Freud thus connected the loss of a loved one with *melancholy*, understood as the neurosis that arises out of the impossibility of possessing the desired object that has vanished with the death of the loved one or with the uncertain or definitive absence of those who have departed.

We must keep in mind that Freudian psychoanalysis relates the entire psychic life to the workings of the unconscious. Grieving must thus also be seen through this hermeneutic lens and is therefore analyzed precisely as "working through grieving." Based on this principle, psychoanalytic therapy is geared toward the integration of a subjectivity imprinted by neurosis, taking into account the conditionings of repressed desire. Specifically, in the case of the loss of a loved one, it is a question of reconstructing, inasmuch as possible, the relationship of the ego with the unconscious and the superego, which have been deprived of their object of possession due to the absence or death of the object of desire. In this sense, melancholy would be a neurosis produced by the impossibility of projecting the ego onto that beloved but lost object, which can no longer be controlled or possessed.

For all these reasons, Freudian work on grieving is directly linked to a reconfiguration of the ego based on a loss that disturbs both the unconscious,

which is no longer able to manipulate the other as an object of desire, and the superego, which only has one "absent" reference on which to project the libido.

Hence the Freudian suspicion that it is almost impossible to work through grieving. In the case of melancholy—which is unexpressed grieving—the disturbed subjectivity remains *suspended* between the increasing repression of the unconscious that no longer has an object of desire and the narcissistic projection of the superego, which is subject to the anxiety produced by the absence.

This Freudian approach to working through grieving is a clear example of the scope and limitations of psychoanalysis as a tool and methodology for analyzing subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This approach submits the constitution of the subject to a rigorous diagnosis—through narratives, dreams, and hypnosis—based on their libidinal pulsations, within and beyond the field of ego consciousness. This phenomenon is typical of the way in which subjectivity is masked, as denounced by Marx and Nietzsche, resorting to other fields of knowledge such as economics and freedom, as well as other masters of modern suspicion, as Paul Ricoeur states.

According to its main critics, the limitations of Freudian analysis for working through grieving lie in the absence of a critique of the phallocentrism of dominant libido, denounced by post-Freudian feminist thinking.[46] In particular, the feminist episteme denounced, in the twentieth century, the idea that the desire to possess as phallic penetration is a universal condition of possession libido. Feminist theory regrets the absence of a *relational* vision of subjectivities—as sameness open to otherness but without a necessary desire for phallocentric domination. This structural flaw of the concept of grieving in Freud's work means that the libido, as well as the unconscious-conscious-superego triad, are founded on a patriarchal and phallocentric vision of subjectivity. They are thus unable to account for the process of narration, memory, and acceptance of absence through another perspective other than that of domination. That is what the feminist psychology developed throughout the twentieth century was aiming for.

In summary, the pathway proposed by Freud a century ago to work through grieving alerts us to the unconscious elements that we project onto the loss of a loved one. It also allows us to go beyond a naïve, uncritical, and sterile vision regarding the mechanisms of narcissistic desire, through which we establish our relationship with the world, with others, and with the Other, always marked by an ego drive that generates suffering, depression, and self-destructive instincts when it fails to overcome self-absorption.

In spite of this limitation, it is also necessary to assess the scope of working through grief. A world of repressed desires and narcissistic projections pulses in the "life before death" of Freudian libidinal subjectivity. When working through grieving, it is necessary to recognize and deactivate these repressed desires and narcissistic projections in order to reconstruct the wounded subjectivity as much as possible.

It is, in fact, a slow and painful process that, at the same time, can be liberating when it is experienced as healing the wound caused by the absence of the desired person, as well as the traces of their memory.

Paradoxically, as noted by feminist psychology, these scars can also be experienced in terms of welcoming and caring, rather than just under the sign of ego conflict and depression due to the absence of the desired person.

## *Lacan or Ritualized Otherness*

For Lacan, however, as he developed in his Seminars VI and VII, grieving is a loss that leaves a *gap* in subjectivity due to the loved one's absence. Nevertheless, the wound is indicative of an Otherness that can be resolved through the social ritualization of the loss.

At this crucial point of the grieving process, Lacan recognizes the role of funerary rites as a constitutional aspect of grieving, stressing—in a way that resonates with the admiration for the "exotic nature" of non-Western peoples during the nineteenth century—the need for working the logos in community:

> What are funeral rites? The rites through which we satisfy what is called the memory of the dead person. What are they if not the total, massive intervention from earth to heaven of the whole symbolic operation? I would like to have the time to do some seminars with you on this subject of funeral rites by way of ethnological research. I remember, many years ago, spending some time on a book which is a really admirable illustration of this, and which takes on all its exemplary value for us, because it comes from a civilisation distant enough from our own for the features of this function to appear really in a striking way. It is the *Li ki*, one of the sacred Chinese books. The macrocosmic character of funeral rites, namely the fact that in effect there is nothing which can fill with signifier this hole in the real, except the totality of the signifier, the work accomplished at a level of the logos—I say this in order not to say at the *level of the group or of the community* (naturally, it is the group

> and the community qua culturally signified that are its supports)—the work of mourning presents itself in the first place as a satisfaction made to what is produced in terms of disorder because of the insufficiency of all the signifying elements to face up to the hole created in existence by the total bringing into play of the whole signifying system for the least bereavement (*deuil*).[47]

It is not that Lacan disregards the way in which Freud proposes working through grieving—in a strict libidinal sense—nor that he denies the decisive elements of the unconscious-conscious-superego triad as part of the human psyche, with its corresponding neuroses.

However, what will shift the Freudian version of psychoanalysis is the Lacanian consideration of the symbolic-ritual dimension of working through grieving, which became known as *subjectivation*.

For Lacan, the transference and projections of the unconscious and the ego onto the superego form part of a network of significations that is always constructed as a social *web* of significations. Out of this network of significations emerge the signified, i.e., multiple and polysemic narratives that subjectivity formulates through language—memories, narratives, symbols, and religious rituals—as the structure that configures the psyche after the collapse implied by the absence of the loved one.

For this reason, the cultural background pertaining to language as a representation system will be a key factor in re-signifying the absence when working through grief. Hence, the relevance, for Lacan, of religious rituals in traditional societies since they made it possible for people and cultures throughout millennia to work through grieving as a way to open up to Otherness. This *symbolic* resolution of trauma enabled these cultures to restore wounded subjectivity when feeling helpless at the time of the loss of a loved one.

The crucial issue of grieving in modern times—identified by Lacan a century ago—lay in the *symbolic orphanhood* experienced by the subject claiming autonomy, completely self-absorbed with hardly any signs of otherness, which only manifested indirectly in social relationships. However, the role played by religious Otherness has become blurred in modern societies, marked by the secularization of their ethical, epistemic, and spiritual horizon.

Hence, for Lacan, it was necessary to somehow retrieve *secular rituality* as therapeutic support to grieving individuals and communities in the midst of the orphanhood of the transcendent Other. Various schools of Lacanian therapy, particularly in South America,[48] developed some forms of ritualized

grieving through linking subjectivation in a state of grieving with symbols and narratives of social, cultural, and aesthetic transcendence, at times retrieving the spiritual dimension contained in grieving.

Since that time, the aim was to find a solution to the emptying of transcendent meaning, which in late modernity has become even more urgent as a critique of the ruling secularization. In the second half of the twentieth century, decolonial thinking has thus been recovering the symbolic-ritual reservoir of the original peoples worldwide, i.e., those who resisted the process of rejecting the divine within the one-dimensional history promoting instrumental reason.

With this late modern sensitivity, the West is rediscovering a symbolic-ritual rationality, already noted by Raimon Panikkar[49] and Xavier Melloni,[50] with an accentuated fascination for Eastern mystical traditions.

This postmodern Western episteme open to the world's mysterious Otherness—in a new decolonial context seen from the global South[51]—is now being reinterpreted and taken on by the social movements made up of the victims' family members, contextual theologies, and forms of spirituality emerging in times of systemic and global violence, in order to process grieving as a form of resilient existence open to the future.

In the last chapter of this book, we shall describe the ritualization of grieving in greater detail. It is worth remembering how—after five centuries of resisting European religious colonialism—the original peoples of Abya Yala have kept alive a vision of funeral rites as "the deceased's right to become ancestors," the aforementioned concise expression of the healer from Bojayá.

To become an ancestor is a right to which the deceased are entitled, which the living must respect in order to keep the life cycle alive. Otherwise, we shall be doomed to oblivion, along with those who have already been annihilated.

## *Grieving as Social Subjectivation: Ritualizing the Absence from a Psychoanalytic and Decolonial Perspective*

Latin American psychoanalysis has provided greater critical depth to the Freudian and Lacanian proposals of trauma and grieving, based on the socio-political reality of the epistemic South, which is critical of hegemonic instrumental modernity.

The following quote expresses a first approach proposed by María Elena Elmiger, an Argentinian psychoanalyst:

> We also reflect theoretically on the desubjectivation process during grieving, such as the one produced, for instance, by contemporary life. Grieving has become trivialized, depriving the subject from symbolic-imaginary resources with which to embrace the trauma produced by the death of a loved one. This lack of resources—that set in after the world wars and the victory of the dyad formed by Science and Neoliberal Capitalism—modified not only the world map but also the map of the subjective and social world: more and more subjects are produced without symbolic resources to reconstruct their subjective life, the social bond, and the symbolic transmission to future generations. Death is no longer accompanied by the myths and rites previously proposed by the Other and the bereaved are left to grieve the dead on their own. Instead of grieving, there is the temptation to commit suicide or murder, the bereaved are silenced and hindered from grieving, and may fall into addictions, insanity, and other states.[52]

The psychoanalytic school of Tucumán, Argentina, has been particularly fertile in therapeutic practice as personal and social subjectivation. While accepting the Freudian and Lacanian postulates regarding working through grief—in the sense of finding a resolution to the libido rooted in the unconscious and projected onto the superego—it does not ignore the community's relevance in the process of healing social trauma through symbolic grieving rituals.

Within this context, Elmiger sets out with an initial diagnosis from a tripartite perspective to propose a psychoanalytic therapy as *subjectivation* of the public, private, and *intimate* spheres:

> We moved towards the concept of subjectivation because it broadens the theoretical horizon beyond the notion of "working through," which, in Freud, refers to the work of the unconscious. Subjectivation also includes within its network what escapes that logic: it articulates the social, political, and religious discourses that refer to the death of the loved ones, i.e., the public sphere with the ways, customs, forms of grieving in private life of each era, i.e., the private sphere, and their unconscious imprint, i.e., the intimate sphere.[53]

In Argentina, there is a psychoanalytic therapeutic practice—among other lines of research based on the convergence of Freud and Lacan—that enables the identification of the desubjectivations of grieving that have not yet been expressed both by the bereaved and the social fabric in order to then

propose subjective, intersubjective, and social healing therapies that interweave the meaning of the intimate, personal, and public spheres.

The first diagnosis made by this psychoanalytic procedure is thus to identify the state of the *subjectivizing* function in grieving. This implies recognizing that amid grieving, the bereaved is "emptied of signifiers in order to face the gap left by the traumatic wound."[54] In other words, in grieving there is a "traumatic collapse" that must be identified through the patient's narrative. This collapse entails two factors: the loved one who has been lost and what the bereaved has lost in his personal and intimate life through this absence (a significant trauma).

The psychoanalytic hypothesis set forth by María Elena Elmiger—following the psychoanalytic school of Tucumán—is that grieving as subjectivation enables the bereaved to reconstruct a network of significations, coming from the precariousness of their own vulnerability produced by the intervention of the social and the public spheres through collective rituals and symbols:

> To move from the real—the field of the traumatic—to the potential re-integration of the lack [i.e., the absence] as a symbol will enable the subject to rejoin the chain of signification and be able to represent herself in this chain and in the social bond.[55]

It is necessary to emphasize here that those who have died leave behind a gap of significations that disrupts the whole subjectivation dynamic of those surviving them. The absence of those who have departed, therefore, becomes a principle of de-subjectivation and can cause the bereaved to suffer a self-destructive neurosis that is expressed as a real or symbolic suicide or as the homicide of a third party upon whom anger is vented because of the unbearable absence.

Hence, the crucial role played by the symbolic-social resource to contribute to restoring the subjectivity of the bereaved amid the grieving can be formulated as follows:

> As Lacan states in *Seminar VIII*, to subjectify a grieving process, it is necessary for the loss to be able to translate into subjective and collective discursive forms, for which we propose that it is necessary to interweave the public, the private, and the intimate spheres.[56]

Since each grieving process "will leave inevitable and unhealable residues"—as Elizabeth Lira recalled in her clinical report regarding the accom-

paniment work with family members of the forcibly disappeared in Chile—the subjectifying function of the grieving process will only make it possible to reestablish a part of the system of significations using the only resource that remains available to human beings in this borderline situation: language with its multiple symbolic variables.

In other words, the subjectivation of grieving conjoins three dimensions of intersubjectivity: (i) the public dimension, as a language of significations reconstructed amid the horror of the absence; (ii) the private dimension, which refers to the subjective sequels produced by the absence of the loved one (guilt, longing, resentment, complaint, and many other feelings that can never be fully worked through, given the inevitable and increasing absence); and, finally, the intimate dimension, as the creation of a phobia through which the bereaved endures, "as a metaphor for the extremely vulnerable subject."

Taking into account the subjectivation in the grieving process taken on by the bereaved, it is necessary to keep open the chain of significations, inevitably inconclusive, as part of the subjectivity affected by the trauma of grieving:

> Upon facing the reality of death, the blurriness between the subject and the Other, this lack of complementarity, is what makes the subjects feel lost without being able to link up to the discursive chain. However, it also enables the subjectification function in grieving: that the subject traversed by and confronted with the pulsational need, with the satisfaction (Freud) to which the death of a loved one confronts him, with the structural insufficiency of signifying elements to face the existential gap that has been created (Lacan), can through the pathways of subjectivation cover the gap in what is real (the trauma, the repetition compulsion, the temptation to pulsational satisfaction, to collapse with the object) with the symbolic lack and to reconnect in an inevitably different way to the chain of significations, that is, to their human condition.[57]

In the end, what remains after experiencing the grieving process as *subjectivation* is the absence, which is re-signified by a community of survivors whose vulnerable subjectivities have also been violated by the trauma. These subjectivities have nonetheless been *reconstructed* by the memory, narratives, and symbols of an absence that is undoubtedly painful but that, paradoxically, also inspires continuing to fight for life and thus celebrate the present moment as a gift that we shall never fully receive.

## The False Theologies of Twentieth Century Holocausts

In this book, we refer to holocausts in the plural because humankind has seen myriad horrors of annihilation of innocent people.

Without neglecting the irreducibility of the Hebrew *Shoah* by the Nazi regime during the first half of the twentieth century, we cannot reduce the meaning of the death of the righteous and innocent to the annihilation of the Jewish people in concentration camps. The Romani, homosexuals, and disabled people who were exterminated as part of the Nazi "final solution" should be included as part of this social trauma.

Furthermore, the holocausts cannot be reduced to the Nazi criminal policy. This concept must be extended to the mass destruction strategies conducted by different ideological forms of fascism, political totalitarianism, and criminal narco-States, spanning from the twentieth century to our present times.

In this epochal context of collective trauma, twentieth-century Jewish thinking is one of the main sources to revisit the question of the *banality of evil* already analyzed by Hannah Arendt. However, in our times, this question is linked to an ethical-political issue regarding the responsibility of modern States in committing criminal atrocities, as well as the question of the complicity of diverse religions and ideologies that fail to address these crimes. Further, this questioning encourages all human beings to face the question regarding how each person and collective has contributed to creating situations, processes, and acts of violence as a way of denying the other, which has led to the annihilation of individuals and peoples.

In the immediate past, post-Hegelian modern Western philosophy[58] also inquired about the conditions of *commonly shared life*, what Hegel called "intersubjectivity." Thinkers such as Marx, Benjamin, Derrida, and Foucault advanced this theoretical inquiry that is linked to historical praxis: how to build mutually recognized political and social communities. Later critical theory—with its two generations of German thinkers—also inquired what should be done to end the annihilation of the righteous and to impede the continued triumph of the executioners.

We shall now explore three moments of this modern reflection about the *theological* response to the question of what to do with the evil of which we are victims, although we are often also co-responsible. The first moment focuses on Walter Benjamin's proposal regarding the political interpretation of history's negativity as revolutionary subversion. The second moment corresponds to the proposal made by Gillian Rose, the neo-Hegelian British thinker regarding "a good enough justice." To conclude, we shall address

a postmodern and decolonial proposal arising from the theological reinterpretation of *messianic time* as an interruption of violent history, which was developed in a previous book.[59]

## *Secularized Messianic Time: From Walter Benjamin to Slavoj Žižek*

Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* is a symbol that synthesizes the interpretation of messianic time proposed by Walter Benjamin. It is an aesthetic of a destroyed world's negativity, from the ashes of which barely arise lamentations of anger, indignation, and rage. Klee's angel represents the state of alert modern awareness is promoting regarding the suffering inflicted on the victimized innocents and the question of the rights to which the dead are entitled. A Marxist path that coincides through its own dialectical logic with the "rights of the ancestors" that the original peoples of Abya Yala care for and defend.

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*,[60] Marx picked up the Hegelian and Marxist idea of the end of history as a dialectic of negativity in order to announce the advent of a time that has been "altered" by the vanquished. The latter introduced redemption into history through "messianic acts" of administering justice, compensation, and the destruction of the victors' logic.

We should keep in mind here that this crucial idea of the negativity of history emerged from Jewish thought, inspired by the Hebrew Bible, according to the update made by Hermann Cohen[61] at the beginning of the twentieth century, from the perspective of the Marburg neo-Kantian school. This process of *redeeming* unfair and violent history would later be secularized by Walter Benjamin. Even in authors like Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas, Cohen's disciples, we can still trace the *theologal* source of modern Hebrew political thinking. However, there is no longer such a theologal stronghold in Walter Benjamin, nor in his European and Latin American Marxist readers of the second half of the twentieth century, such as Hannah Arendt in the United States and Bolívar Echeverría in Mexico.

In recent times in Mexico, Enrique Dussel picked up the idea of messianic time in order to proceed with his *Politics of Liberation* within the context of the critique of voracious neoliberal capitalism and to offer theoretical underpinnings to the social and political movements of the Latin American left, emerging after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Dussel thus welcomed the arrival of the governments of Lula da Silva in Brazil, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, and Evo Morales in Bolivia to political power in the early decades of this century. More recently, Dussel welcomed the arrival of Andrés Manuel López Obrador to the presidency of Mexico with the following words:

> The messianic function no longer needs the legitimacy achieved through elections, it now requires the participatory praxis of the people as a whole, each one on their own ground. The messianic function requires the daily correction of fraternal and responsible criticism. It is no longer the time for rounds of applause but to act by multiplying leadership at all levels.[62]

For Dussel, in effect, social movements with revolutionary acts as anti-capitalist resistances arise from the negativity of history as a *messianic function* that must be kept active. In his opinion, these social resistance movements are "sparks" of the messianic time announced by Walter Benjamin, with all the ethical-political charge implied by the experience of these social movements that subvert the aforementioned negativity of history.

Unfortunately, for Dussel, messianic time's *theologal* ground has vanished on behalf of a philosophy of history and a political philosophy located in the variables of the dialectic of negativity as the only site for human redemption. As opposed to what other thinkers suggest, such as Giorgio Agamben,[63] Dussel's interpretation of Walter Benjamin does not entail any possible transcendence.

It is important to differentiate here the *theologal* ground of messianic time from the so-called "Holocaust theology," which is also different from the Hegelian-Marxist political interpretation proposed by Benjamin.

The aforementioned Holocaust theology emerged from European Jewish thinkers during the second half of the twentieth century. Although this "theology" in its theoretical justification refers to some ideas set forth by Walter Benjamin, we consider that it must be distinguished from his political interpretation because, as we discussed earlier, by postulating the ineffability of the evil that the *Shoah* assumed, that "theology" ends paralyzing all discourse and politics.

In this regard, upon commenting Gillian Rose's work, Kate Schick claims that:

> The Holocaust, perhaps more than any other event, has come to represent the brokenness of modernity—its failure to deliver its Enlightenment promises [...] Holocaust piety, then, is emphatically against representation and comprehension: it argues not only that attempts to

> understand are doomed to failure, but also that they, inevitably domesticate the horrific experiences of millions.[64]

Hence the severe criticism made by Gillian Rose—whose reflections about "good enough justice" will appear in the next section—goes to the heart of the argument of that misnamed "Holocaust theology": if the extreme evil emblematically represented by Auschwitz and Dachau under the Nazi regime is ineffable, then we remain paralyzed before their power, demobilized from any political and social action capable of reversing the damage caused by the Nazi executioners. This interpretation of the ineffable seen through the lens of immobility is, therefore, unacceptable.

Gillian Rose and other post-Hegelian and post-Marxist European thinkers see such a "mystification of the incomprehensible" as an affront to reason and its capacity to defuse evil. They even go so far as to ruthlessly criticize the "ethnography of the Holocaust" promoted by the international Jewish community in the United States, Canada, and Europe after the defeat of the Nazi regime in 1945. Although their goal was to keep alive the memory of what had happened, narrating multiple stories through the publication of written memoirs, films, and documentaries, they were unable to *name* evil. This "ethnography of horror" was carried out through their own interpretation of victimization, which only led to the restitution of material goods, psychological therapy, and some social recognition of the damage. However, it did not attempt to understand the evil suffered, its causes, as well as its mechanisms and strategies, and also refused to denounce the corruption of political power that made the Holocaust possible.

For European critical thinking of the late twentieth century, it was necessary to go beyond the melancholy or depression produced by this ethnography of the Holocaust. Part of Jewish thinking after the Shoah—such as Rose's proposal, in addition to Derrida, Vattimo, and Agamben—took another direction in order to find clues to promote critical and viable political thinking for Europe, the United States, and Canada after the collective trauma produced by the *Shoah*.

In this regard, Seth Moglen directed his therapeutic research with *Shoah* survivors to go beyond the "Holocaust piety" towards accompanying the grieving process using a social and political perspective that already pointed to the *anamnetic justice* that the Frankfurt School would later develop:

> Moglen returns to Freud's dyadic account of mourning (whereby the *subject* mourns the loss of the *object*) and adds a third dimension: the underlying social forces responsible for social loss. [...] 'Who or what

> is responsible for my loss? Where should I place blame, and what is the proper object of the anger that accompanies loss?' These searching questions help the subjects to work towards increased understanding of the ways in which social, historical, and political conditions facilitated their losses, prompting them towards political action, rather than melancholic retreat.[65]

"Holocaust piety" was thus explained as an escape from the reality of collectively inflicted horror and evil. It did not represent a *theology*, strictly speaking, but a piety-infused evasion of a lacerating reality in the face of the massive annihilation suffered by millions of people in Europe during the two great wars of the twentieth century.

To summarize, "Holocaust piety" does not represent a relevant interpretation of the evil experienced by the Jewish people under the Nazi regime, but rather its sacralization. It is, therefore, unacceptable as a critical interpretation of the horrific events that we face and deconstruct in new situations of horror through new practices and narratives of dignity, life, and hope.

In order to address the issue of evil critically, it is worth remembering the *ponerology* proposed by Andrés Torres-Queiruga[66]—a rigorous philosopher and theologian—as an interpretation of evil in the world that attributes evil to our own responsibility as humankind, without an easily resorting to some interventionist divinity. According to Torres-Queiruga, in order to be able to consider God the Father as "Anti-evil," it is necessary to leave behind the childish reflex of blaming a miraculous and omnipotent god for the evil in the world, which is caused by human freedom and the structures of injustice and violence that humankind has generated.

Torres-Queiruga proposes transiting from theodicy to *anthropodicy* in order to address the issue of evil in its self-critical sense. It is a question of what *we should do* in order to overcome this historical contradiction that generates the suffering and death of innocent people, a historical aberration caused by fallible and finite human freedom rather than by a mysterious and sadistic divine will.

A theology of evil, seen through a modern critical lens, thus reorients the question in order to mobilize human thinking and action towards overcoming the contradictions that produce victims of violence resulting from human freedom. We are, therefore, also responsible for finding a solution to evil.

Finally, as part of the post-Marxist thinking regarding messianic time, let us briefly consider Slavoj Žižek's[67] interpretation of political temporality as a messianic interruption of historical continuity.

Žižek grounds his argument in an understanding of history as an *event*, as a rupture of linear time and an interruption of established order —in this sense, he recognizes himself indebted to Rancière[68]—but not only politically, but also meta-politically. Žižek defines an event as:

> [...] something shocking, out of joint that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things; something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernible causes, an appearance without solid being as its foundation.[69]

For Žižek, shocking or traumatic events, particularly in the twentieth century, reveal the Real in its constitutional frailty to such an extent that the entire political system is evidenced in its frailty. It, therefore, needs to consolidate its power through control strategies that even control the victims. For Žižek, a culture of remembrance is counterproductive for political activation since its effectiveness lies in "silencing the survivors" as a way of latently domesticating persistent violence because its structural causes have not yet been revealed nor analyzed, much less resolved. Survivors thus become something akin to "heroes in the service of the State."

Therefore, for Žižek the discourse of forgiveness, like the discourse of amnesty and reconciliation in other times, immobilizes the survivors' *resistance*. Hence, a politics of grieving seen through the lens of redemption in history cannot ignore *negativity*—and its disruptive nature—through which the political must inevitably communicate at the risk of getting caught in the trammels of the status quo.

It is precisely for this reason that the *politicization* of postmodern society is played out in the capacity to break the linear time of State-controlled narratives that *depoliticize* its citizens. This anti-systemic politicization aims to pierc postmodern societies with "the splinters of messianic time" which Walter Benjamin alluded to. According to Slavoj Žižek, these splinters represent a narrative of redemption that interrupts violent linear time and sets up *interruptions* to that politics of remembrance in order to keep alive the clamor of the survivors.

Having made this statement, Žižek takes a second step. He questions an "eventful" reality as a philosophical issue pertaining to "the concrete uni-

versal," which Hegel had considered to form part of his phenomenology of history. However, for Žižek, this concrete universal is not a dialectical category, but an *event* that reveals itself with all its historical, psychoanalytic, and political density:

> At first approach, an event is thus *the effect that seems to exceed its causes*—and the *space* of an event is that which opens up by the gap that separates an effect from its causes. Already with this approximate definition, we find ourselves at the very heart of philosophy, since causality is one of the basic problems philosophy deals with: are all things connected with causal links? Does everything that exists have to be grounded in sufficient reasons? Or are there things that somehow happen out of nowhere? How, then, can philosophy help us to determine what an event—an occurrence not grounded in sufficient reasons—is and how it is possible?[70]

Žižek comments that the substance of the question regarding the notion of event is then revealed as a philosophical problem which, seen through a transcendental lens, was insufficiently solved by Heidegger as an unveiling of the self, or even ontically as a revolution of the proletariat. However, in the depths of his thinking lies the "metapolitical" question regarding the unprecedented aspect of the event lodging a theological problem. As far as we are concerned, an event denotes messianic time as an interruption of linear history:

> The only appropriate solution is thus to approach events in an eventful way—to pass from one to another notion of event by bringing out the pervading deadlocks of each, so that our journey is one through the transformations of universality itself, coming close—so I hope—to what Hegel called 'concrete universality,' a universality 'which is not just only an empty container of its particular content, but which engenders this content through the deployment of its immanent antagonisms, deadlocks and inconsistencies.'[71]

It is thus impossible that all events form part of "concrete universality" since it unhinges any fixed order and self-centered awareness. Such *eventful* disruption is paramount to rebellion against any will to exercise political domination. Thus, events are revealed as *interstices*[72] of disruptive action—and therefore *an-archic*—as a constant source of democracy itself:

> Politics proper thus always involves a kind of short circuit between the Universal and the Particular: the paradox of a *singulier universal,* a singular which appears as a stand-in for the Universal, destabilizing the 'natural' functional order of relations in the social body. This identification of the non-part with the Whole, of the part of society with no properly defined place within it (or resisting the allocated subordinated place within it) with the Universal, is the elementary gesture of politicization, discernable in all the great democratic events, from the French Revolution (in which *le troisième* état proclaimed itself identical to the Nation as such, against the aristocracy and clergy) to the demise of ex-European Socialism (in which dissident 'forums' proclaimed themselves representative of the entire society against the party's *nomenklatura*.
>
> In this precise sense, politics and democracy are synonymous: the basic aim of antidemocratic politics always and by definition is and was depoliticization, that is, the unconditional demand that 'things should go back to normal,' with each individual doing his or her particular job... And, as Rancière proves against Habermas, the political struggle proper is therefore not a rational debate between multiple interests, but the struggle for one's voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner: when the 'excluded,' from the Greek *demos* to Polish workers, protested against the ruling elite (aristocracy or *nomenklatura*), the true stakes were not only their explicit demands (for higher wages, better working conditions, etc.) but their very right to be heard and recognized as an equal partner in the debate.[73]

Within this *eventful* interpretation, the grieving process is expressed as an "uprising," as a memory held by the survivors that translates into a resistance to the State's depoliticization through *disruptive* acts that condense an alternative temporality different from the linear temporality imposed by the political system in turn.

In a few words, Slavoj Žižek's contribution to the political, philosophical, and theological question of the possible memory held by the survivors regarding the social traumas of the twentieth century lies, in our opinion, in the affirmation of a *meta-politics* constructed as an ongoing disruption of language, memory, bodies, and meanings in the face of the desire to control postmodern democracies that persist in their eagerness to tame the clamor of those who dwell amid the rubble of history's negativity.

## *Gillian Rose's Neo-Hegelian "Good Enough Justice"*

We thus step into another stream of political memory as a viable path for victims of systemic violence. We shall now address the suggestive critical interpretation proposed by Gillian Rose[74] in the late twentieth century in order to understand the grieving process of a collective trauma seen from a political perspective through her concept of "good enough justice."[75] Rose's extensive philosophical work set forth the need to rethink old Hegel's idea regarding the dialectic of intersubjectivity as mutual recognition.

Analogously, Paul Ricoeur had also proposed—in his memorable essay *Les parcours de la reconnaissance*,[76] published in 2005—that same critical route to overcome the *impasse* of twentieth-century political philosophy after the failure of modern democracies. Five years earlier, Ricoeur had devoted his reflection on political philosophy to this subject, as attested by a lecture given in Santiago de Compostela about the Hegelian struggle for recognition, in an attempt to surpass Hobbes in order to think critically about the possibility of *givenness* as a constitutional aspect of a political philosophy:

> I conclude with a question of my own: to what extent is it possible for us to provide a foundational meaning to those rare experiences [of exchanging gifts]? I would say that upon having a feeling of the sacred and uncontrolled nature of the ritual of exchange in its ceremonial aspect, then we shall have the promise of having been recognized, at least once in our lives. However, if we have never had the experience of being recognized, of recognizing ourselves in the gratitude of a ceremonial exchange, then we shall become violent in our struggle for recognition. It is these rare experiences that protect the struggle for recognition that hinder us from returning to violence as understood by Hobbes.[77]

Pertaining to a family of Jewish survivors and an ingenuous thinker, Gillian Rose proposed a philosophical work against the melancholy experienced by many *Shoah* survivors. From a Hegelian philosophical perspective, Rose analyzes the logic of fascism through the lens of the *collapse* of recognition. Hence, Rose evokes the course of mutual recognition proposed by old Hegel as a pathway to overcome the master-slave, the executioner-victim, the proletariat-capitalist dialectic in order to think about possibly overcoming the collective trauma that remains stuck in rivalry.

Faced with the aforementioned "Holocaust piety," closely following Hannah Arendt here, Rose proposes the unceasing inquiry into how to un-

derstand horror as an act of *political* resistance that reawakens in the survivors the possibility of continuing to live.

As part of the lineage of modern Jewish thinking initiated by Hermann Cohen—making an unprecedented contribution to the Athens-Jerusalem dyad proposed by Cohen in the early twentieth century—Gillian Rose proposes a topology of four rather than two cities in order to establish the coordinates of political life: Athens, Jerusalem, Auschwitz, and the city of the nameless survivors. However, she makes this proposal in an original way, different from Cohen's initial proposal.

For Gillian Rose, Athens symbolizes modernity as "demonic rationality" that sooner or later leads, in its perverse logic, to Auschwitz. Jerusalem is the city of revealed otherness, whereas Auschwitz is the city of abomination. Meanwhile, the fourth nameless city would represent an alternative to the city of horror: one that can be constructed in the here and now with "good enough justice" that would allow survivors to avoid falling into abysmal depression:

> The third [sic] city – not Athens, not Jerusalem, not Auschwitz – is a city about which simple stories cannot be (truthfully) told, a city that demands the speculative negotiation of the middle between oppositions.[78]

That right balance, in the sense of anamnetic justice—later developed by the Frankfurt School and taken up by Reyes Mate[79] in Spain—is the result of a "political negotiation" that the survivors will have to establish in order to demand "good enough justice" to commemorate their dead and achieve a proportional restitution of the damage inflicted on them.

Despite the relevance of Gillian Rose's critique of the immobilization of Jewish Holocaust victims, her proposal for "good enough justice" is a *political* form of negotiation that falls short of vindicating the aforementioned anti-systemic victims of the epistemic South. Systemic victims do not victimize themselves, but rather demand epistemic, political, and social justice that will enable them to reformulate politics, understood as the reconstruction of the social fabric from the perspective of the negativity of the defeated, in its disruptive sense, "from the bottom up and reversing" the history of domination. In spite of its limitations, we would here like to briefly describe "good enough justice" as a political expression of the grieving produced by *Shoah* survivors.

We thus come to the last section of this chapter, in which we shall address a different interpretation of grieving from the perspective of (anti)systemic victims: those who are no longer willing to tolerate the history of capitalist, patriarchal, colonial, and sacrificial hegemony.

We shall see this process through the lens of *messianic temporality* as evoked by Walter Benjamin, but in its prediscursive theologal sense. Theology thus fulfills its prophetic function of revealing the *an-archic* background of the political and philosophical issue of *sharing life in common*, as survivors taking charge of the memory of our dead. An anamnetic memory that sows seeds of redemption in the context of a history of violence.

## *A Postmodern and Decolonial Theological Reinterpretation of Grieving from a Messianic Perspective*

Messianic time is one of the master ideas of Hebrew and Christian biblical thought that gives existential depth to the divine-human revelation to which the righteous in history bear witness. It denotes the unprecedented nature of human temporality, which discovers in violated and vulnerable subjectivity a potential redemption of the violent history that defines humankind's ancestral conundrum. Such potential experience arises from a logic of givenness, which, according to Girard, goes beyond the logic of sacrificial rivalry that generates more and more victims in order to ensure an increasingly precarious order.

In a gradual ascent, messianic time appears in the Bible at key moments in the history of the Hebrew people first and of the Jesuanic community later, as an actual *unveiling* of experience potentials corresponding to a subjectivity that has been able to overcome the struggle for recognition seen through the lens of givenness-related rivalry, as Paul Ricoeur notes in his commentary about Hegel.

Closer to our times, Giorgio Agamben has been one of the main authors who—together with René Girard's mimetic perspective—has placed the issue of interrupting the violent escalation that is leading humankind to the edge of the abyss at the center of philosophical and political debate. In his book *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, Agamben develops an archaeology of the concept of messianic time using Saint Paul's words *ho kairos synestalmenos estin* ("time has been shortened") found in the *First Letter to the Corinthians*. With these words, Saint Paul condenses all the ethical and anthropological meaning of the messianic gesture in the First Testament. Quoting the Talmud, Emmanuel Levinas[80] also evokes this ges-

ture as a principle of the ethics of otherness, reminding us that "the Messiah will arrive when you take the bread out of your mouth and give it to those who are hungry."

In effect, the "contraction of time" as violent temporality might take place through the experience of the righteous in history. In fact, they *subvert* mimetic rivalry via existing through givenness, as an expression of the messianic function noted by Saint Paul in the *Letter to the Ephesians*: "[Jesus the Messiah] in his body, he broke down the wall of hatred that kept them apart" (2:14).

Messianic time thus denotes *kairological* temporality, i.e., an anticipatory experience of redemption in the here and now, that the righteous in history experience as an ethical-political, but also a mystical gesture of givenness, i.e., asymmetrical love of gratuitousness.[81] Paraphrasing Levinas, it can be said that the rift of the fateful cycle of Cain's temporality—imprinted with fratricidal and sororicidal rivalry—takes place at the core of violent history as an inauguration or "eschatological anticipation" of *another mode of existence*.[82]

From this hermeneutic perspective, we understand "the splinters of messianic time" to which Walter Benjamin referred, but highlighting their *theologal* depth, i.e., their existential openness to the transcendence of givenness, as a pre-discursive experience from which meaning springs, but makes no sense whatsoever because it is not *arché* but rather *an-arché*.

In this context of messianic time, grieving is thus possible as a *process of remembrance of those who have been annihilated* by necropower but who have gone beyond the wall of hatred and thus gain access to another realm of temporality.

Experiencing *messianic temporality* is a *spark*, an *anticipation,* and a *radiance* of what is yet to happen in the bosom of the human-divine sphere. Furthermore, remembrance is a *commitment*[83] assumed by those of us who survive the annihilated victims and take on the historical responsibility of an ethical and political, as well as spiritual order for their remembrance. On the other hand, such memory can only be understood as a horizon of gift and givenness, simultaneously transcendent and immanent, i.e., as a horizon of the love of asymmetrical and non-reciprocal gratuitousness, which is what humankind evokes and celebrates as a *divine world* irrupting into violent history thanks to the righteous.

The grieving experienced by the survivors seen through a messianic lens, therefore, points to the complex reality characterizing the subjectivation of the victims. In this process, there is a *qualitative* leap from temporality experienced as rivalry to temporality experienced as *givenness*.[84]

To explain this anamnetic process, we shall develop three phenomenological moments of grieving as "messianic interruption": (i) first, grieving as the death of the ego; (ii) then, grieving as a result of the task of the righteous who have been annihilated in their search for truth, justice, and retribution; (iii) to conclude with the ritualization of the absence-presence of the "forgiving victims," through symbols of anticipated communion with the dead.

### *(i) Grieving as the death of the ego*

Psychoanalysis is a typically modern therapeutic praxis, which has incorporated postmodern elements, such as the subjectivations already described in the case of psychoanalytic therapy that keeps us alert so as not to get caught in the trap of sameness that revels in its dreams of childhood omnipotence. The narcissistic projections characterizing the development of personality must be understood as a process of desire in which otherness must find its place beyond the alter-ego in order to experience intersubjective relationships that overcome the neurosis of an "individual in relationship"[85] with others as mere objects of desire.

The *theologal* key to this process of overcoming narcissism as egoic self-assertion in opening up to otherness is found in the de-subjectivation that the righteous in history experienced when they recognize that the other is a *neighbor*, i.e., forms a constitutional part of the *self as another*, again paraphrasing Levinas. The other is neither enemy nor ego projection, but rather is recognized by its visage that expresses clamor, caresses, and call. The phenomenology of subjectivity that we formulated in previous research,[86] inspired by Emmanuel Levinas, is an expression of messianic and theological temporality characteristic of subjectivity open to the irruption of transcendence in immanence.

Hence, the death of the ego, seen through a messianic lens, necessarily has to do with setting up a mode of intersubjectivity that is only possible through the love of giving, going beyond the desire for egoic projection, including the desire for one's own survival, as Ricoeur stated about himself. It also implies renouncing the idea of survival of the other because this desire masks egoic and neurotic projection.

Such emptying of the ego opens a "fissure" in subjectivity that assumes temporality as the experience of sameness through opening up to otherness. This experience increasingly forms part of us as temporality open to the possibility of a *promise* in an intersubjective process of becoming. Levinas stated:

> The task is to conceive of the possibility of a break out of essence. To go where? Toward what region? To stay on what ontological plane? But the extraction from essence contests the unconditional privilege of the question "where?"; it signifies a null-site [non-lieu]. The essence claims to recover and cover over every ex-ception - negativity, nihilation, and, already since Plato, non-being, which "in a certain sense is." It will then be necessary to show that the exception of the "other than being," beyond not-being, signifies subjectivity or humanity, the *oneself* which repels the annexations by essence.[87]

Therefore, grieving for those who have departed—the supreme expression of the experience of negativity—especially those who were annihilated by the violence of executioners, is an ethical, political, and mystical call to experience *another* temporality. It will then be possible to become *the* messiah's vulnerable and violated body through the wounds of which flash sparks of redemption.

As aforementioned, the Freudian way of working through grieving—although essential to resolve the different neuroses affecting the bereaved in the configuration of their egoic sameness—is insufficient to enable subjectivity to integrate absence into an interweaving of intersubjectivities. The subjectivation that enables an interconnection of the intimate, the private, and the social—as described in the case of grieving as a tripolar interweaving—leaves unresolved the *experience of givenness,* which would be that dimension of the intersubjective that becomes expressed as a remembrance of the wounded personal *and* social body.

Hence the importance of messianic temporality understood as that experience that enables a narcissistic ego to be overcome through establishing a relational network of being-with-others as part of the messiah's body. It is thus possible to reinterpret—through the lens of grieving and subjectivation—in all its depth those powerful words spoken by Saint Paul: "I no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me" (Galatians 2:20-21).

Such messianic temporality is inscribed as the Golden Rule of the Hebrew *Torah*, taught by the Pharisees and endorsed by Jesus of Galilee: "You shall love your neighbor *kamocha* [like unto me]: like yourself" (Lev 19:18b and Matthew 22:39), as Levinas suggests it should be translated. Upon translating *kamocha* into Romance languages, different apparently contradictory circumlocutions would have to be used: "you are your neighbor," "your neighbor is you." Otherwise, we would have to be more audacious in translating Judaism's Golden Rule in order to recover its messianic meaning: "you shall love your neighbor *kamocha*: as you yourself have been loved." This

is the inspiring translation that Jean Marie Vincent proposes, taking into account the Hebraic context of the memory of a people redeemed from slavery.[88]

Thus, when I assume the gift represented by the face of the other, it is no longer 'I' who exists as an individual ego, isolated in its narcissism, but rather, as a portal to messianic time, this recognition radically changes the experience of individual subjectivity in order to become a *subjectivity in relationship* and, therefore, a memory of the ancestors who were freed from slavery in Egypt.

It is, after all, a Hebrew expression that denotes messianic time. The common translation of the Hebrew word *kamocha* does not fully express the depth of its meaning that indicates a relational state and the remembrance of the ancestors, denoting a way of existing in mutual recognition: "the other who is you." It more radically denotes an action of givenness in memory of he who first loved the enslaved people: "you shall love your neighbor as you yourself have been loved."

The grieving for the righteous who have been annihilated thus becomes a process of remembering, in terms of the survivors' mandate to *re-member* the messianic body, because the dead form part of the messiah's wounded body. Both the systemic victims and the subjectivities that have been denied by mimetic violence form part of the messiah's wounded body. In other words, the deceased also form part of the messianic body, encompassing the intimate, the private, and the social spheres bound to the intersubjectivity to which we all form part by a "mysterious" or theologal knot, since, as the Apostle reminded the early Christian community of Thessalonica, "time has been shortened."

### *(ii) Grieving as a "task" of the righteous who have been annihilated in their search for truth, justice, and reparation for harm suffered*

In his Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul speaks of the death of the 'old self' in the following terms: "For we know that our old self was crucified with him [the messiah] so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to." (τοῦτο γινώσκοντες, ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ / Rom 6:6). The death of this 'sinful' condition thus forms part of the process of entering into messianic temporality, i.e., it is a condition that makes it possible to participate in the redemption of a violent history.

Such a being-for-death becomes imprinted in the messiah's social body in such a way that St. Paul repeats: "For you died and your life is now hidden with the messiah in God" (ἀπεθάνετε γάρ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ / Col. 3:3).

The eschatological anticipation of death therefore brings us together with the righteous who were sacrificed by mimetic violence. However, this experience takes place in such a way that it is not a question of praising suffering, or fratricidal/sorocidal violence, even less of praising the death of the innocent. It is a question of 'anticipating' that death, disempowering it from its capacity to totally destroy through the messianic gesture of givenness to open a fissure in that wall of hatred, through which life can shine like the radiance of redemption.

But, what do Saint Paul's words mean when he says that we "died"? It implies that being-for-death describes the ego that is on the verge of being redeemed through the messianic interruption made possible by the righteous in history. Thus, only through givenness, a free gift, a present that is a surplus of being, will life's *eschatological* anticipation be possible.

How then can the negated life of the righteous be "hidden with the messiah in God"? Only as a splinter of messianic time, i.e., as a painful thorn in the messiah's flesh, as an open wound through which redemption seeps: "Out of my love for Christ, I rejoice in my weaknesses, in my affronts, in my needs, in the persecution I suffer, in my anguish; for when I am weak, I am strong" (διὸ εὐδοκῶ ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς διωγμοῖς καὶ στενοχωρίαις στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ· ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατός εἰμι / 2 Cor. 12:10).

The weakness described by the Apostle refers to the vulnerable and violated condition of a subjectivity that experiences the impact of violence, deconstructing its death power. This subjectivity inhabits a force that paradoxically and resiliently emerges from the messiah's body, i.e., from the righteous in history who have "shared their bread with the hungry." Weakness and strength are therefore related to two ways of experiencing temporality: that of the spiral of death in times of violence, or that of messianic temporality that becomes interrupted because "time has been shortened" (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν / 1 Cor. 7:29).

From this messianic perspective, working through grieving is much more than overcoming the neurosis of losing the object of desire. This healing process implies incorporating the *remembrance* of wounded humankind into the messiah's body as the temple of divine *Ruah*. We are here using the term remembrance in its double sense: remembering as making use of memory and re-membering as the retrieval of annihilated bodies. It is therefore a

question of experiencing grieving as a process of messianic temporality that opens up subjectivations to the hope of reintegrating the dead and the living, becoming bodies that pertain to the others and are with and for the others.

Only in this way can the words of Jesus of Nazareth resound in all their disruptive and decolonial, poietic and prophetic force, through the lens of a messianic condition: "For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for him all live unto him" (Θεὸς δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νεκρῶν ἀλλὰ ζώντων· πάντες γὰρ αὐτῷ ζῶσιν / Luke 20:38).

### *(iii) The ritualization of the absence-presence of the righteous in history, through symbols of "anticipated communion" with the dead*

Thus, we proceed to the third element of the grieving process experienced through the lens of messianic temporality, which consists of the ritual and symbolic remembrance of the life surrendered by the righteous in history and the victims who have been annihilated by the necropower of all times, but who have perdured in the memory of the survivors.

Although Lacanian psychoanalysis recognizes the importance of rituals in the process of subjectivating grieving in order to help the bereaved to reintegrate into society in a way that allows them to survive the painful absence, from a theological perspective, this symbolic dimension is crucial in order to come to terms with eroded subjectivities.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas defined the sacraments, in a classical sense, as sensitive signs that effectively communicate the grace of Christ.[89] For centuries, this interpretation was constructed and seen through a metaphysical and sacramental lens geared to confession, thus reducing grace to a "supernatural" divine energy, conveyed through clerical symbolic rites that "objectified" divine life dynamism. It is imperative to deconstruct this objectifying version of the sacramental nature of the messiah's body in postmodern times, particularly because it formed part of the epistemic, patriarchal, and sacrificial colonialism that imposed Christianity as a religion.

For our theological formulation of the experience of the resurrection from a postmodern and decolonial perspective, it is essential to understand and potentiate the *messianic* dynamism at stake in the process of building inter-subjectivity through an existential lens with its corresponding ritual, symbolic, and performative expressions.[90]

This means that the funeral rites performed by the bereaved in situations of social trauma—such as those we have referred to earlier—are not only a therapeutic and social strategy of "damage control" to heal neuroses and

even prevent real or symbolic suicides, due to an unresolved absence. These rites have nonetheless deeply inscribed a "messianic radiance" that must be clarified for our research into the resurrection.

Although the absence of those who have already died is a wound inflicted on the survivors that may never heal, the experience of memories nourished by the commitment to proceed with the interrupted mandate of he/she who is absent which is in the hands of the survivors, then, this remembrance is the beginning of an experience of inter-subjectivity that goes beyond the modern individualist conception of the subject.

Considering that Hebrew and Christian wisdom claims that *our neighbor* is part of subjectivity as a *messianic body*, then funeral rituals are more than a narcissistic projection of the individual, the family of the bereaved or the collective that mourns their dead. These communion rituals—in many cultures associated with rites of sharing food in memory of the dead—contain a seed of hope as "future life." We are referring here to a future not in the chronological sense of a future "beyond" linear time, but a future as a radicalization of the *now*—*kairos* as shortened time—as the insertion of messianic temporality into the conflictive present, marked by absence and memory with justice, retribution, and hope.

In this sense, grieving a social trauma, experienced from a messianic perspective, is expressed through rites of *communion* with the dead through which the community is *re-membered* and therefore re-integrated into the living and the dead. The community thus gains access to the experience of its messianic condition in the here and now of anamnetic *kairos*.

Precisely because a community of survivors identifies as *the messiah's body*, it assumes justice for its dead as its historical and political responsibility with the demand for truth and retribution for a partial reparation of damages, thus symbolizing resilience through life-celebrating performative narratives.[91]

Only under certain conditions conducive to the reconstruction of the torn social fabric, may the community of survivors be able to catch a glimpse of the horizon of forgiveness as a gift and as a historical task that will "eschatologically anticipate" what is to come as a gift of the loving Otherness underlying the real.

Finally, it is important to state that the ultimate reconciliation of the *messianic body* goes beyond the boundaries of space and time, since the recognition of the negated other, the acceptance of one's possible responsibility in provoking horror and mimetic violence are inevitably pending. The executioners will to compensate for the damages they have inflicted is also inevitably pending. It is diachronic linear temporality that—as an expres-

sion of the *Katéchon*—delays the arrival of the *messianic*. This fulfillment of messianic existence will not arrive as a triumphal cosmic or political entry of a redeeming personage, but as a stage of intersubjectivity achieved in synchronic shortened time.

In the territory of messianic temporality, grieving a social trauma acquires a *kairological* dimension, i.e., it anticipates redemption in the here and now of shortened history that flashes as a radiance of justice, truth, and recovered dignity, through the fissures of the violent history that the righteous in history began to open.

Commemorating the dead as *living beings* who form part of the *messiah's body* implies using memory, truth, justice, and a recognition that commemorates and celebrates their absence-presence, within the paradox of life, in order to recover those who were annihilated by systemic violence.

Such *anamnetic* justice thus becomes memory's pathway to redemption that we are allowed to travel on with discreet hope in order to reach the communities of survivors in present history, marked by necropower and, in its messianic ground, by the surrendered life of the righteous in history.