

Are you on my side? The intertwining of internal and external reality in an “occupied territory”: re-thinking analytical neutrality in an era of radical polarisation

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Content

When the ethnic or cultural other becomes merely an enemy to be destroyed, the bond to our common “human” roots appears inexorably broken, and as a result, any psychic space in which to maintain “impartiality” comes under attack: as Freud writes in *Thoughts for the times on War and Death* (1915), war breaks down the “barriers of civilisation” and also prevents psychoanalytic science from maintaining its “serene impartiality”, which is however an essential tool for recognising unconscious processes, and therefore constitutes a fundamental metapsychological tool both in clinical practice and in the construction of analytical knowledge.

How, then, can we re-think analytical neutrality in times of war and extreme polarisation? Can the metapsychological attitude of neutrality still succeed in defending spaces of thinkability, spaces for the “transformation” of the unconscious, precisely where unconscious drives are manifested in radical actions and splits? Or on the contrary it runs the risk of covering the blind areas of the analyst himself? These questions will be addressed through reflection on the clinical case of a humanitarian worker in the Palestinian territories, where the violent upheavals linked to recent events are intertwined with the oldest wounds of personal history.