

Beyond Neutrality: Psychoanalysis with Traumatized Refugees

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Abstract Content (EN)

Abstract (A joint presentation with the IPA Migration and Refugee Committee):

Refugees who arrived in Europe in the last decades were often exposed to war, violence or torture in their countries of origin and, even more frequently, survived violence and torture at European borders, or structural violence in countries in which they applied for asylum. To that we can add everyday racism, xenophobia and islamophobia, and eventual deportations which increase in intensity over time. Many of these measures are implemented against international human rights laws.

Our work with refugees is often within precarious or non-existent settings, but we still need to provide a holding environment for individuals with unrepresented posttraumatic mental states. How can we express a clear moral standpoint, actively participate in administrative, legal procedures and psychosocial services while protecting boundaries which secure neutrality and therapeutic relationship? In addition, we need to serve as a mediator between different languages, tradition and practices for refugees who are confronted with a very different and strange culture, who have lost everything.

In this presentation, we examine how massive reality-based trauma, persecution and social injustice put pressure on the classical psychoanalytic stance of neutrality and demand technical and ethical reconsideration.