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## Another Conception of Trauma after the First World War

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### Editorial

From the point of view of the history of thought, the First World War, which upset the world, also upset the Freudian elaborations, and therefore psychoanalysis.

“Death made a shattering return, in the form of trauma brought to a power unequalled until then, that of an absolute catastrophe” [1].

A profound upheaval, an unprecedented cataclysm, an inconceivable disaster for those who lived it, the 1914-18 war is a real disaster. It changes from top to bottom cultural references and subjective data. It corresponds to a political, social, cultural and human upheaval. The consequences of this upheaval are numerous, as well as their psychological implications.

For Douville, the war produced an anthropological mutation of the relationship of man to the reality of his death. “The obsession of the mutilated corpse forever undermines the unified image of a body resting in its death. We can no longer imagine the dead person in a place where the survivors gather fervently. The crushed, burst and fragmented body is a reality that history brings out as the truth of the forehead and as a haunt of the soldier; thus, breaking down the foundations of the self” [2]. When peace comes, the disfigured or mutilated former soldiers will be honoured too quickly in parades and patriotic speeches, and will be forgotten, most often undesirable.

The integrity of the body is lost, while it was preserved even in death. Moreover, in conditions of atrocity yet unseen, the sudden and unstoppable disappearance of the comrade causes a deep injury out of the ordinary.

Many war traumas are caused not by the attack of one's own body, but by the extremely rapid or sometimes immediate decomposition or disappearance of the body of the comrade, covered with sheaves of peat raised by the bursting of a shell. The survivors, spectral and collapsed, are terrified to be still

there. What are they suffering more? An unbearable experience of enormity and suffocation overwhelms and persists after their return.

War fights cause radical and often irreversible alterations of the human body, its shape, its limits. The soldier loses confidence in the reassuring idea that death will not dismember his body.

“The classic fixations about the mutilated body are coming back. This return comes from the industrial production of death and the echo spreading far from the front. It creates panic states, including in non-combat units and reserve regiments. The return to the proper body of the objectification of death imposes itself by ruining the necessary anthropological fiction which makes of the dead an honourable and appeased corpse, called to be abstracted in the fabric of language and in the chain of memories” [3].

The enormous traumatic impact during battles breaks even the most established psychic markers, radically challenging the reliability of God, nature, society, superiors and elders. The fighter has only recourse to friends who share the same horror as he does. In dying, he calls the mother of infancy; the fathers abandoned him.

Speaking of trauma since 1914 requires a new way of approaching this notion, both theoretically and clinically. Therefore, a fundamental revision became necessary.

### References

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