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IDENTIFICATION, ATONEMENT AND THE MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF VIOLATION:

ON PATRICIO GUZMAN'S *NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT*

Abstract

This essay considers the nature of mourning and melancholia in light of Patrizio Guzman's film, *Nostalgia For The Light*. It examines the position of three women dealing with the aftermath of Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, in which their close family members were disappeared and murdered. It views their experiences through the lens of a moral psychology that is at once ethical and psychoanalytical. A key concept in both fields is loving identification, and this is linked to a desire to atone, in the original meaning of making whole or being 'at one' with another. It is argued that such a conception lies at the core of a moral psychology of guilt, and the analysis is then developed into an understanding of mourning and melancholia. The women in the film are understood as involved in a dual struggle: to mourn their lost loved ones, and to resist efforts to make them see themselves in melancholic terms.

Keywords

Nostalgia For The Light, moral psychology, identification, atonement, guilt, mourning, melancholia

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IDENTIFICATION, ATONEMENT AND THE MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF VIOLATION:

ON PATRICIO GUZMAN'S *NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT*¹

His thoughts were resolving into simple, elementary shapes. This is really all we have got, this increase, this matter of life loving itself, everything we have has to come from this.

Ian McEwan (1992, 244)

The self, in its autonomy, is an atonement structure, a structure of reconciliation, and as such a supreme achievement.

Hans Loewald (1980, 390-4)

This essay considers what Patricio Guzman's film, *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010) may tell us about reacting to victimhood in the face of state violence. In the film, Guzman follows a group of women who search for the remains of their disappeared family members in the Atacama Desert in Chile, young people who were the murdered victims of the Pinochet regime. The film is about state violence through disappearance, and the effects in terms of grieving and mourning on family members 40 years after the event. In this context, the film's power is derived not only from the tragic and poignant nature of the family members' quest, but from its setting this in reflections on

¹ This essay was presented as a plenary lecture at IACR 2018, held at Lillehammer, Norway in August 2018, and then at a seminar on Law and Violence at the Pontifical Catholic University, Valparaiso, Chile in January 2019. I am grateful to participants on both occasions for comments, and especially to Dr Daniela Jara for responding to the paper at PCU. Thanks also to Alison Ribeiro de Menezes and John King at Warwick for their comments.

the desert, the universe, and the long history of humankind. Here is the film's blurb, which, unusually, does not exaggerate:

Patricio Guzman travels 10,000 feet above sea level to the driest desert on earth for this hugely-praised documentary. Here, the sky is so translucent that it allows astronomers to see the boundaries of our universe. Yet Chile's Atacama Desert climate also keeps human remains intact: pre-Columbian mummies; explorers and miners; and the remains of disappeared political prisoners from the years of the Pinochet regime. Women sift the desert soil for the bones of their loved ones, while archaeologists uncover the traces of ancient civilizations and astronomers examine the most distant and oldest galaxies. Melding celestial and earthly quests, *NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT* is a gorgeous, deeply moving, and personal odyssey into astronomy, archaeology, geology and human rights.

The underlying question the film raises concerns the ethical states that underlie human rights struggles and human rights law in the field of transitional justice. What is the relationship between such ethical states and the political, legal and institutional forms which seek to express them? In asking this question, I do not suggest a simple relation between the two, whereby the latter express the former in a straightforward way. This seems to me to be a complex issue. Violation and victimisation have occurred, and been taken up in processes which purport to give expression to, and address, the wrongs done, but such processes emerge in political, legal and institutional settings which shape, direct, channel, deflect, and block the expression of the underlying concerns.² This is not to say, however, that such processes should be seen solely as a means of achieving a political transition that leaves ethical issues untouched. I am sympathetic to the criticism of transitional justice that it operates functionally to reproduce social systems, by enabling political transitions among elites to take place, but I do not think that is the whole story.

² For example, victimisation is real and needs to be addressed according to the violations that have occurred, but justice processes may construct victims according to political perceptions of who is the 'good' victim. See McEvoy and McConnachie (2012, 2013) and for a specific illustration, Hearty (2016).

If there is anything Guzman's film teaches us, it is that the ethical position and plight of the victim remains at stake in human rights struggles in processes of transitional justice. If we are to understand the post-Pinochet transition to a form of democracy in Chile, we need to think about the ethical and emotional reactions of the women in the Atacama desert around issues of violation, victimhood, holding to account, mourning and, as I shall argue, melancholia, and resistance to it. More than this, what these women have to say opens the door to profound truths about what it means to be human, which represent the bedrock of human rights struggles and the often hidden or repressed 'moral conscience' of politically directed and shaped transitional justice processes. To see why this is so requires us to think about how violation and victimisation impact on people. We need to understand how these things are able to affect human beings, and how the moral and the psychological combine in human lives. We need to understand, in short, the moral psychology that underpins the struggles of victims of human rights violations, and how this represents the moral truth lying within transitional justice processes.

MORAL PSYCHOLOGY AS GROUND AND METHOD

In this section, I discuss the idea of a moral psychology to underpin our understanding of the ethical nature of struggles against violation and victimisation as this is represented in *Nostalgia for the Light*. I argue for an understanding of the concept that includes both ethical and metapsychological elements which constitute the conjoined ground of moral experience.

Concepts for a Moral Psychology

To begin with an example, I recently considered the ethical experience of the victim as involving both love of the self and of the other, and how this can lead to a relationship of forgiveness with a perpetrator (Norrie, 2018a). To forgive another can be understood in both moral and moral-psychological terms. In moral terms, forgiveness is a bivalent operation, which includes both a

'giving to' another, and a 'giving up' in relation to the other and also for oneself. The word itself contains both possibilities – a giving to (*forgiving*) and a giving up (*forgiving*), the latter like a *forgoing* or a *forswearing* (doing without). But why should a victim forgive in either sense? Why not simply stay with the resentment at the injury (c.f. Améry, 1980; Levi, 2013, ch. 6)? At the level of moral choice, this seems a plausible reaction to victimisation, and at the level of what one morally ought to do, it often seems to be wrong to say to a victim that they should forgive. This is a moment of ethical choice which should be respected.

That said, and maintained, there is a further level at which the issue of forgiveness should be considered. How one reacts to victimhood, or how one ought to react to it, involves understanding what it means to be a victim in both moral and psychological terms. To forgive at this level is something that can provide a perpetrator with a release of anxiety and grief for what they have done. It can also free the victim up through the moral decision to give up the claim of victimhood, and the emotions attached to it. The moral choice and the psychological outcome are closely connected, and indeed represent two sides of the same emotional phenomenon. It is in their conjunction that moral choices become comprehensible. What underlies our moral choices is a moral *psychology* that binds the levels of the moral and the psychological and helps us understand what is truly at stake for human beings who deal with moral emotions. We should consider the realm of moral psychology as one which brings together the moral and psychological aspects of human life, and indeed including their physiological elements too, to understand the kind of being, the human animal (Norrie, 2018b), that expresses its embodied emotional reactions in *ethical* terms, and that therefore finds moral decisions *psychologically* necessary. Embedded here is a complex, emergent, relationship between different layers of being: the physical, the psychic, the emotional, the moral.

Like forgiveness, another example here would be guilt, which is a prime candidate for treatment as a form of moral psychology. Guilt engages ethical, psychic, and somatic dimensions of human being

(Norrie, 2018b) – think of famous figures in literature such as the Macbeths, or Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. ‘Feeling guilty,’ says Herbert Morris, ‘we feel bad ... rotten, depleted of energy, and tense’ (Morris, 1976, 99). We discuss Morris below. Guilt is a good place to explore what Morris and Bernard Williams (1993, 1995) call a naturalistic moral psychology, which, for Williams, was ‘one that can include our best understanding of our psychological life, [which] we know ... is compatible with naturalistic explanation’ (Williams, 1995, 19-20).³ Importantly for this essay, I shall argue that the ways in which we might investigate the issue of the *guilt* of a perpetrator becomes highly relevant for exploring the struggle against *violation* for a victim. This may seem counter-intuitive, for surely these are two very different, indeed normally counterposed, moral experiences. In both, however, the issue relates to what it means to identify with another, as both an ethical and a psychological notion, which we will explore below.

Linking the Ethical and the Psychological

Returning to the linking of the ethical and the psychological, with both Williams and Morris there is an underlying push in their naturalism towards a psychological understanding that is related to themes in psychoanalytic metapsychology. In my own work (Norrie, 2018b), I have tried to move in that direction by following Jonathan Lear (1990, 1998, 2015, 2017), and Hans Loewald (1980). They develop Freudian metapsychology by considering the implications of the later Freud’s structural account of ego formation from the earliest state of primary self-love or narcissism. In Lear’s account,

³ Williams’s call for a naturalistic moral psychology in which ethical claims are compatible with naturalistic psychological explanation resonates with critical realism’s positions on ethical naturalism and moral realism. For critical realism, ethical naturalism is explicated in terms of the necessary transition between fact and value, while moral realism holds that morality is an objective property of the world, involving universal free flourishing in nature (Bhaskar, 2016, 139). Williams’s naturalism is undeveloped, but concerns the necessary relationship between psychological being and ethical thinking, implying that the best ethics would be most compatible with how human beings are psychologically constituted. If the psychological and the ethical are connected, this suggests a link to critical realism’s argument for the existence of ‘the moral real’ developed out of the ontology of human species being in nature (Bhaskar, 2016, 139). At the same time, it points to an underdeveloped element in critical realism, that of the psychological. This is what is described by Bhaskar as the ‘stratified character of the embodied personality’, one level in what he called ‘four planar social being’ (Bhaskar, 2016, 53). In his early writing, Bhaskar (1979, 123, 140, 143; and see the discussion in Collier, 1994) drew on Freud’s metapsychology, using his understanding of the unconscious to explicate certain aspects of human agency. Williams’s idea for a naturalistic moral *psychology* could be seen as inviting a convergence with this side of critical realist thought.

this structural theory of the ‘enforming’ of love in the ego and the superego links Freud’s metapsychology to the kind of philosophical project endorsed by Greek philosophers around the possibility of human flourishing. Lear is both an Aristotelian and a Freudian, who from this joint position can write that:

Philosophy has long considered human life to be distinctive (and valuable) in virtue of its capacity for self-conscious awareness From the time of Plato and Aristotle ... one of reason’s central tasks has been taken to be the thoughtful, self-conscious integration of the human psyche. The point is not merely that psychoanalysis provides insight into how such integration might be achieved – far beyond anything Plato or Aristotle imagined – it is that psychoanalytic activity itself is the very exercise of self-conscious, thoughtful integration of the psyche.... Psychoanalysis gives us unparalleled access to the microcosm of reason’s working at the interface of (what Aristotle called) the rational and non-rational parts of the soul. (Lear, 2015, 212)

This means that the work of psychoanalysis is wedded to the ancient philosophical quest for human happiness, in the Aristotelian sense, as the eudaimonic condition:

Psychoanalysis is the flourishing human activity of the rational soul taking immediate, poetic, and practical responsibility for the nonrational soul. Other names for this activity are ... truthfulness, rationality, freedom and eudaimonia. (Lear, 2017, 47)⁴

Psychoanalysis, or psychoanalytic metapsychology, embraces implicitly the Socratic demand to know, to be true to, oneself – and to act on that knowledge. This is the path to, and the sine qua non of, human flourishing, and the question here is how issues of guilt, forgiveness and the other psychological emotions experienced in the face of violation and victimisation fit into this standpoint.

⁴ ‘In this way, psychoanalysis can be seen as an attempt to resume the ancient project of an ethics and politics grounded in and explained by a robust conception of human flourishing. This is the project the ancient Greek philosophers could not themselves complete.’ (Lear, 2015, 17)

Put differently, how does human moral psychology negotiate violation and victimisation and locate these in a structural understanding of human mind, action and being. Put more simply, what good do such mental states do human beings?

The Nature of Identification

In what follows, I will make much of the notion of identification with another, and it may be worthwhile simply to state here in brief terms what this means. To begin with, I will follow a philosophical line taken by Herbert Morris, who links identification to feelings of both solidarity with another, and of guilt in relation to another. An identification with others 'implies, for example, that we suffer when they do, just as we are pleased when they are. We imagine their feelings, thereby 'entering into' them' (Morris, 1987, 239). The idea of a psychological connection, an 'entering into' another, indicates the proximity of Morris's view with the psychoanalytic view I will ultimately pursue. Morris emphasises that this is more than mere sympathy, for it leads us to 'have the feelings we imagine [the other] to be having as contrasted with our merely responding in an appropriate way, say with sympathy, to [them]' (Morris, 1987, 239).

With regard to the deeper sense of identification developed in psychoanalysis I will follow Freud, in the line pursued by Lear and Loewald. For them, Freud's later structural theory of mind is the key to understanding the human psyche. 'Primary narcissism' is not understood as we understand the idea of narcissism generally, that is as a view of self that exaggerates its own importance. Rather, at the earliest stage of human life, it represents the position of unformed love, or the life force, or libido, or Eros, which becomes enformed through developmental processes of ego and super-ego formation. These are made possible through the loving attention of parent figures, who make self-identification, individuation and self-differentiation possible. The infant, which has the latent material potential to develop into the child and the adult, 'takes in' the example and the model of the parent figure and makes it its own through a process of identification:

Identification is known to psychoanalysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person.... Identification endeavours to mould a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model. (Freud, 1985, 134-5)

Paradoxically, it is through identification with another that one becomes oneself, and this process of identification is then the basis for loving oneself and others. It binds nascent and inchoate primary narcissism to the evolving self in its relation with others. We shall build on the relevance of this for thinking about guilt and emotional and ethical states resulting from violation in what follows. For now, however, I turn to the three main protagonists in the film, *Nostalgia For The Light*, to see what they tell us about confronting violation and victimisation.

NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT: THREE WOMEN

The film focuses on three women and their experience of victimisation by the Chilean regime. Two of them, Violeta Berrios and Vicky Saavedra search the Atacama desert for the remains of their forcibly disappeared family members. The third, Valentina Rodriguez, is herself the child of disappeared parents, who speaks about her experience of that situation.

Here first is Violeta Berrios speaking:

For as long as I can if we must carry on searching I will do so. ... They say they unearthed them, ... and threw them in the sea.... At this point in my life, I'm 70, I find it hard to believe what I'm told. They taught me not to believe.... I never stop asking questions If someone were to tell me they threw them out on the top of that mountain, I would find a way of getting right to the top. I'm not as strong as I was 20 years ago. I'm not as healthy. It would be difficult. But hope gives you strength. I no longer count the times Vicky and I have gone into the desert. We set out full of hope and return with our heads hanging. But we always pick ourselves up, give ourselves a shake and set off again the next day *Some people must*

wonder why we want bones. I want them so much. And I'm not the only one. When they found one of Mario's jawbones I told them I didn't want it.... [I said] 'I want him whole. They took him away whole, I don't want just a piece of him'. And I'm not saying it just for him, but for all the disappeared.... I don't want to die ... before I find him. (emphasis added)

To cover up their murder, the remains of the disappeared were buried in the desert, then dug up and disposed of elsewhere. In the process, the bodies were broken up and parts were left behind. It is these parts that Violeta refers to here. The importance of finding Mario's body is crucial to the quest, and it drives Violeta's very being. We need to understand that sense of centrality to her life in her moral psychology. Note also that Violeta's ethical demand and psychological need incorporates a claim against the state, to recover Mario's body whole, to put the pieces back together, for it is only that that will satisfy her. This is compounded by her commitment to finding not only Mario, but the mortal remains of all the disappeared.

Second, here is Vicky Saavedra describing her slightly different moral psychology:

[I found] a foot. It was still in his shoe. Some of his teeth. I found part of his forehead, his nose, nearly all the left side of his skull. The bit behind the ear with a bullet mark.... They finished him off with a bullet in the forehead.... I remembered his tender expression and this was all that remained. A few teeth and bits of bones. And a foot. Our final moment together, was when his foot was at my house. When the mass grave was discovered, I knew it was his shoe. That night I got up and went to stroke his foot. There was ... a smell of decay. It was still in a sock. A burgundy sock. Dark red. I took it out of the bag and looked at it. I remained sitting in the lounge for a long time. My mind was blank. I was incapable of thinking. I was in total shock. The next day my husband went to work and I spent all morning with my brother's foot. *We were reunited. It was a great joy and a great disappointment because only then did I take in the fact that my brother was dead. (emphasis added)*

Unlike Violeta, Vicky is able to do some of the work of mourning her brother by living with the parts of his skull and foot that she finds. She continues to search for the rest of him, so the search for the whole body remains important to her too. Significant here is Vicky's moving remembrance of the brother who was taken from her, contrasted with being with his partial remains, and then the acceptance of his death. All these become possible because of the sense of being reunited with her brother that the particular remains discovered permit.

Finally, there is Valentina Rodriguez, whose statement of her position is as follows:

I am the daughter of detained and disappeared parents. First they detained my grandparents.... They threatened them relentlessly to make them reveal where my parents were, or else I, too, would disappear.... *Astronomy has somehow helped me to give another dimension to the pain, to the absence, to the loss.* Sometimes, when one is alone with that pain, and these moments are necessary, [it] becomes oppressive. *I tell myself it's all part of a cycle ... we are all part of a current, of an energy, a recyclable matter. Like the stars which must die ... [What] happened to my parents ... takes on another dimension ... and frees me a little* My grandparents ... found a way to make my parents important reference points for me. [They] were able to overcome their pain so that I could have a happy healthy childhood. *Sometimes I feel like I'm a product with a manufacturing defect which is invisible. I find it funny when people tell me that it doesn't show that I'm the daughter of disappeared prisoners. [My] children don't have this defect....* I ... am happy that my son is growing up like this. (emphasis added)

Valentina's thoughts are both philosophical and psychological. Her comments as an astronomer link her sense of loss to a metaphysical understanding of a universe in which generation and perishing are ubiquitous, yet life goes on. These comments are directly linked to the aesthetic themes of the film, which focuses powerfully on the views of the universe that can be accessed in the Atacama, and the flow of life that is part of the universe's being. Indeed, the film only focuses on the recent

violations of the natural and historical orders of things in its second half. The first half expresses the sense of the universe and history's *longue duree* as the ethical setting in which the present and recent past occur, in a way that locates them in a much bigger natural order, which does not at the same time diminish recent sufferings; rather, it magnifies them. Metapsychologically, there is Valentina's sense of herself as a defective mechanism, that there is something missing in her as a result of the loss of her possible experience of loving parents. Nonetheless, her words make it clear just how much her grandparents played a parenting role in her life – without ever substituting for the parents she lost. But what, then, was the defect she was left with?

These words of Violeta Berrios, Vicky Saavedra and Valentina Rodriguez convey strongly the sense of loss and the drives that ensue from it. The bare words only take us so far, and the three women should be seen in the film, as their embodied actions, expressions and convictions animate what they say, and bring home the emotional passion and compassion they convey. But the words have their own power, and they raise the question, how are we to analyse the moral psychology of victimisation and violation they express? How, in short, do these three women's words and actions relate to a retrieval of themselves, and help them to live as human beings after their victimisation?

THE MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GUILT – AND VIOLATION

As I have suggested, one way to understand the moral psychology of what it means to be a victim leads counter-intuitively through an understanding of a perpetrator's guilt and its requital. The reason for this is that the moral and psychological idea of identification, which lies at the core of the struggle against violation and victimisation, is also key to guilt, and it is well developed in this area. In this section, I build up a picture of guilt as it has been treated initially in moral philosophy and then in psychoanalytic thought. I make no claim to completeness in either field, but focus on how the idea of identification has been used in both. I begin with Morris and then move to Loewald's and Lear's development of the later Freudian metapsychology. Both elements, the philosophical and the

metapsychological, go to build a composite picture of guilt in moral psychological terms. In the course of the discussion, I will also relate the ideas developed around guilt to what it might mean to experience violation and victimhood for the women in *Nostalgia*.

Identification, Atonement and the Ethics of Guilt

To perpetrate a wrong on another is, in Morris's account of the moral feeling of guilt, to cut oneself off from the other and thereby to lose a sense of one's own wholeness:

In seeing oneself as cut off from others one feels a sense of incompleteness, as a lover who loses a loved one may feel that a part of him has been taken away or torn from him. The person feels that peculiar pain and uneasiness when feeling guilty of cutting off a part of himself.... In cutting oneself off from others one comes to see oneself as being cut off, not whole, as if one had destroyed what one loved and thus also destroyed a part of oneself. This image of cutting off and being cut off, not whole, finds support in our view of the guilty person as not being able to function as a whole person could and does, not being able to enjoy life fully.... (Morris, 1976, 99-100)

The emphasis on the loss of wholeness is important to the feeling of guilt, but its significance for the victim of a serious violation may also be immediately sensed. The link is clearer still once we think of the drive of guilt to address the lack of wholeness as being a matter of *atonement*. Today, we think of atonement as something a person does or gives, usually in connection with another to whom atonement is owed. 'To atone' is treated as an active verb, but this is not what atonement originally meant. In its early usage, it meant 'being at one with' – literally 'at-one-ment' – as Morris makes clear:

To feel relieved of guilt is to feel again that one is joined together with others and with oneself, to no longer be divided within and at war with ourselves and others. This need to make amends, to mend what has been damaged, and to be at one again with others and

oneself is at the core of guilt. If it is successful, it is atonement, being at one with. (Morris, 1976, 100)

My suggestion will be that what the women in *Nostalgia For The Light* are seeking to do is to reunify their lives by becoming at one again with in themselves and with their lost loved ones. Because of the violation of forced disappearance, they are emotionally incomplete, and seek to restore completeness through activities of mourning. Without conflating at all the two states, mourning for a victim has in this sense a common moral and psychological ground with a perpetrator's feeling of guilt. It is another way of striving for at-one-ment, or repairing loss, in this case according to the position, or in the appropriate mode, of the victim of a violation. It seems strange to think that acting to address a perpetrator's guilt and acting to address victim's violation should share a common ground. The reason for the commonality lies in the fact that both involve the psychological element of identification with another, where the other is one with whom one would wish to be in a state of atonement. It is because a perpetrator of a wrongdoing identifies with a victim that that person feels the guilty need to atone, to be 'at one with' that person. It is equally because of identification with a violated person that a person who emotionally feels another's loss will seek to respond, to be 'at one with', the victim.

A position in a way between that of the guilty perpetrator and the one who feels the violation of being a victim is that of the person who feels guilt for what another has done. Here again one can see how identification is at stake. In the following passage, Morris describes why one might feel guilty when for example a friend or family member has perpetrated a wrong:

[T]he process of identification, once operative, carries a psychological momentum so that, in identifying with the person engaged in wrongdoing, one imagines how one would oneself feel.... [These] feelings connected with identificatory processes are often perfectly normal, and it is their total absence that may occasion concern.... Because they have defined themselves in a manner that reveals identification with others, the actions of those others

are granted a power over them Individuals may in these circumstances believe themselves guilty. (Morris, 1987, 239-40)

My suggestion is that what is true of co-identification in guilt is I think equally true of experiencing victimhood. The women in the desert, Violeta Berrios and Vicky Saavedra, very clearly identify with their disappeared family members, and the act of physical recovery of their bodies is their way of retrieving the lost loving identification that they felt for them. Similarly, Valentina's loss is felt as an identification that is absent, and experienced as such, as the 'manufacturing defect' she feels in herself and will not pass on to her own child. But this then still leaves a question about moral psychology. Thus far we have explored the ethical states of guilt and victimhood as these are based on a sense of psychological identification, but we need to go deeper in order more fully to understand what is at stake in human psychology.

Identification, Atonement and the Metapsychology of Guilt

As we have seen, Morris has given us a sense of the importance of identification to moral psychology. His psychoanalytically inflected ethical position allows him to say that identification with others implies 'that we suffer when they do, just as we are pleased when they are' and that we 'imagine their feelings, thereby 'entering into' them'. We have the feelings 'we imagine them to be having as contrasted with our merely responding in an appropriate way, say with sympathy, to [them]' (Morris, 1987, 239). We also saw, briefly, how important identification is to Freud's metapsychology, which he described as 'the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person....' Identification 'endeavours to mould a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model' (Freud, 1985, 134-5). As developed by Loewald, identification with another and atonement lie at the heart of at least one account of Freud's metapsychology of guilt, and I want to explore this to develop a full picture of the moral psychology of guilt before thinking about how we might see violation and victimhood in similar terms.

In recent work, I have explored Freud's account of guilt in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1985) (Norrie, 2018b, 2020). I argue that one can identify two accounts of guilt in Freud, one that can be described as 'Kantian', persecutory and repressive, the other as 'Aristotelian', restorative and reconciliatory. The latter account, I argue, is the morally more powerful, though both kinds can be observed in modern societies. It is developed out of the Loewald and Lear interpretation of Freud's moral psychology mentioned above.⁵ Insofar as humans feel guilt,⁶ they can be thought to do so because of two elements associated with the development of human metapsychology.

Identification and Ego Ideals

The first is that they have taken on the ego ideals given to them through the process of identification with parent figures, so that any falling short of those ideals is experienced by the individual as a tension between what they have done and what they think they ought to do (Norrie, 2018b). That tension, or anxiety, is what we call guilt, and it emerges from identification with parent figures, but also from others in the course of a life. This is the most straightforward way in which one can understand guilt and its relation to identification at the metaphysical level. That it complements the process of moral identification described by Morris can be readily seen. We are accustomed by our basic ego development to identify with others and to relate to them by a process of internalisation of another viewpoint. To a process of identification we owe the development of moral standards against which we measure our actions. When we then identify with another whom we have harmed, our actions and moral standards clash. Identification occurs as the basis for moral experiences because it already happened in the constitution of our psychological being. The moral and the psychological thus conjoin to give us our ethical being, here in the shape of an anxiety that we call guilt.

⁵ In describing the two accounts of guilt in Freud as 'persecutory' and 'restorative' or 'reconciliatory', I align Freud with Melanie Klein's work on the two positions she describes as the 'paranoid-schizoid' and the 'depressive', while recognising the different approaches involved (Norrie, 2020; on Klein, see Reeves, 2018).

⁶ It is of course an open question for empirical investigation whether individual persons do or not.

Atonement and the Superego

There is a second important element that conjoins the ethical and the psychological, and it concerns the nature of atonement. In the Oedipal struggle, the act of becoming a person in one's own right involves breaking from parents, and their essentially constitutive place inside one's psychic being. Breaking away leaves a residue of bad feeling for having rejected those whom one also loves. They need to be expelled from the inner sanctum of one's psychological being if one is to be a person in one's own right, but one must still regret the expulsion, of those to whom one owes so much. This is the drama of the Oedipal struggle in which a person creates a sense of their own independence, and this is the essential experience from which there develops the superego. The superego is the basis for the coherent organisation of an individual life, and is therefore necessary to human development, but it leaves a residue of regret which forms a template for future life. This explains why Loewald calls the superego an atonement structure in my prefatory quotation. It is a structure that has the default mode of seeking to restore a past wholeness, an 'at-one-ment', and feeling bad for having destroyed it. The whole passage in which he makes this point is as follows:

In an important sense, by evolving our own autonomy, our own superego ..., we are killing our parents. We are usurping their power, their competence, their responsibility for us, and we are abnegating them, rejecting them as libidinal objects. In short we destroy them in regard to some of their qualities hitherto most vital to us.... To 'kill' one's (psychic identification with) parents in order to be oneself is necessary, but it involves rejection at the deepest, most constitutive, psychic level of a person's being. The pleasure of selfhood is thus measured against remorse at the manner of its achievement, the death inside of the fused child-parent entity.... Without the guilty deed of parricide there is no autonomous self ... no individual self worthy of that name, no advanced internal organisation of psychic life, [so that] guilt and atonement are crucial motivational elements of the self.... Guilt then is not a troublesome affect that we might hope to eliminate in some fashion, but one of the

driving forces in the organisation of the self. The self, in its autonomy, is an atonement structure, a structure of reconciliation, and as such a supreme achievement. (Loewald, 1980, 390-4)

All this points to the central importance of identificatory processes in the formation of a human being and its basic ethical commitments. By identifying with others, we become ourselves, and in the process of building up a sense of ourselves, we establish certain ideals of conduct which we permit to monitor our actual conduct, and which we use to judge its moral quality. In this way, an ego reacts and regulates itself, and the feeling of tension and having done badly which accompanies failure is the basis for a sense of guilt. Similarly, the very act of constituting oneself, in breaking away from the loved parent figures, constitutes a sense of guilt and lack of wholeness, and atonement becomes a residual template in the psyche related to the establishment of a coherent self – in the initial, retrospective, sense of wanting to restore a lost unity, and in the prospective sense of wanting to make up to another and to restore broken relations. Thus guilt and the desire to restore are templates for being a moral person, and the key psychological dimension to this is that our moral development stems from and relies on processes of identification with others. This is the underlying metapsychology on which ethical identification and atonement, in the manner described by Morris, rests. This is no accident, for Morris's moral analysis and Freud's Loewaldian-interpreted metapsychology describe the two levels in one conjoined phenomenon: human moral psychology.

Now, my suggestion is that what is true of guilt, for a perpetrator, or more generally for an observer of a violation or a victimisation, is also relevant to what happens when a person is victimised or violated. Identification and atonement in meta-ethics and metapsychology are also to be found here, in the case of the victim of a violation. We already saw, ethically, how there could be connections in our discussion of Morris. I now want to go further into metapsychology to see how violation and victimhood work at this deeper level.

THE METAPSYCHOLOGY OF VIOLATION

In the previous section, we considered how understanding the concept of identification could link together the ethical experience of the guilty person and the victim, for both seek to find a wholeness that has been lost – on the one side by the perpetrator of the violative act, on the other in the experience of that act for a victim. In both cases, there is a sense of identification with a wronged victim and their loss, either from the point of view of the perpetrator or, in the case of the three women victims in *Nostalgia*, from that of the family of the victim. Now we need to think more deeply about the moral psychology of identification and atonement in connection with violation of the victim: how is it located in human metapsychology?

Identification, Violation and Mourning

In order to answer this question, I will take up Freud's thinking in his essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, 1984), where he identifies two psychological states that are fundamentally connected with loss. Freud identifies mourning as the process of coming to terms with, and detaching from, a lost identification with and attachment to another, and melancholia as offering a twist on this where a loss occurs in difficult or traumatising circumstances. With regard to the former, Freud writes that

Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person.... Profound mourning, the reaction to the loss of someone who is loved, [involves a] painful frame of mind,... loss of interest in the outside world – in so far as it does not recall him - ... loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love (which would mean replacing him) and the same turning away from any activity ... not connected with ... him.... Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up ..., and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it. (Freud, 1984, pp 251-3)

Loss of a loved person with whom one has identified involves the need to come to terms with the place that person has occupied in one's life. This is complex work for the mourner, who must somehow come to reckon with an emotional wholeness, an 'at-one-ness', that has been lost because a person with whom she identified is no longer present. There is a parallel here with the Oedipal struggle. In that situation, the emerging person pushes out the parent figure to create a coherent sense of self. Here, a coherent sense of self, which involves identification with another that has been 'taken in', is lost because the other that was 'taken in' has herself been lost. In the Oedipal case, the self forces the other out, which is thereby lost; in the other case, the loss occurs externally, by death or other circumstances. In both cases, wholeness is at stake, and adjustment around what it means to be at one with oneself and one's world is necessary. This adjustment involves, as Loewald puts it, accommodation to the loss that involves both a de-identification with, and assimilation of, the lost object. This is the process of mourning whereby the lost object with whom one identified is reabsorbed into the person as a loss that is survived, while the lost object is carried forward in a new way:

Side by side with object relations, processes of identification persist and re-enter the picture Mourning involves not only the gradual, piecemeal relinquishment of the lost object, but also the internalisation ... of aspects of ... the relationship between the ego and the lost object which ... become a relationship within the ego system. (Loewald, 1980, p.266)

Mourning is about loss and retrieving a sense of wholeness after the experience of loss, though the renewed self is not the exact same self as it was previously. We see this occurring, I think, for the three women in *Nostalgia For The Light*. Vicky Saavedra's experience of taking home the remains of her brother's body, of sitting with them, of remembering the whole person that had worn the same sock, the joy of being reunited, together with the pain of realising his death: these all depict the making whole, the at-one-ment, that is the working of the mourning process. Searching in the desert

is the effort to mourn, to make whole; finding parts of the body, taking them home, holding them, these take the process forward.

I would also suggest that Valentina Rodriguez's sense of a lost part of herself, a part that could never be constituted is also a form of mourning. This too is the experience of loss, of persons who loved her as a baby, an experience which may not be remembered, but which was nonetheless constitutive of her as a human being. The grace-full and loving attention of her grandparents to tell her of the parents she had lost is also a part of a work of seeking to give wholeness where wholeness was denied. The parents who have been lost and were not known are nonetheless permitted to be internalised and identified with in their absence, but Valentina must still acknowledge the absence in herself, one that is so obvious to her, and this seems to be a form of mourning that can hardly be completed, though it may be supported and redeemed in the evolving loving relations Valentina experiences and herself develops.⁷

For all three, however, this is not all that is happening. A loved person dies or leaves, an identification is lost and absorbed: this is human experience all the time, and we all will have to find ways of re-achieving our sense of identity and of wholeness as best we can through the passage of time. In the cases of Violeta, Vicky and Valentina, loss did not occur in the usual way, it was forced upon them by violative and victimising acts by a military group claiming public authority, and the question is what difference this makes. With Violeta, we already see something of this. She refuses to give up the search for remains because she demands the whole body be returned to her, and she searches on behalf of all victims. The state took her family member away, the state must return him intact. In her case, and I think in that of the others, the work of mourning, of finding wholeness after loss, involves intrinsically political commitments to hold the state to account, and to bear witness to what the state did. Mourning as a search for at-one-ment is irreducibly political in its form. It is also

⁷ On Valentina's situation, see also Benjamin (2018, 233), who writes of her burden of feeling chosen to be saved by her grandparents at the cost of her parents' lives, and of the role appearing in *Nostalgia For The Light* played in permitting her to break through her sense of dissociation.

in the tangible form of a struggle – a struggle to get up and go out into the desert, to bear disappointment, and to renew commitment. Mourning cannot be pensive and private in this setting. It is an active fight to maintain the conditions of, and the possibility to, mourn. Mourning becomes the citizen's right, and without the assertion of that right, what would be the alternative?

Violation and Melancholia

The question leads me back to Freud and the distinction he drew between mourning and melancholia. Mourning occurs at the loss of an object that has been the focus of emotional investment, someone or something that has been loved and lost. The loss must be dealt with, the loved and lost object re-accommodated, albeit in a different way.

In Freud's account, melancholia goes deeper than this. It involves an element of intrasubjective change as a person 'takes in' the negative characteristics of a situation in which a loved object has been lost under 'difficult' circumstances. These include 'all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import feelings of love and hate into the relationship' (Freud, 1984, 260). Melancholia translates a situation of external loss in disturbing or traumatising circumstances into a complex, conflicted and negative process of re-organising of the self. The loss in a situation of violation or victimisation is not simply absorbed, processed and then moved on from. Rather, it becomes a negative element in the psychic organisation of the person who has been so affected. Where mourning involves a 'loss in regard to an object', melancholia 'points to a loss in regard to [the] ego' (Freud, 1984, 256):

The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone.... (Freud, 1984, 254)

The external loss becomes an internal psychological adjustment of a negative kind. Of the two conditions, mourning and melancholia, Freud recognises many similarities. In both there is painful dejection, cessation of interest in the world, loss of capacity to love, and inhibition of activity. What melancholia has that mourning does not is, first, a lowering of feelings of self-worth to the extent of self-reproach, self-reviling, and the expectation of punishment; and second the feature of a withdrawal of the problematic complex from conscious understanding. The person who mourns is more or less aware of her loss, while the melancholic imports the trauma as a more or less unconscious part of her self-organisation.

The parallel here with the Oedipal struggle is important. Whereas there, the outcome of the struggle is, under normal circumstances, positive in that the ego develops a further element that provides it with greater overall power and coherence, in melancholia, the ego also develops a further element, but here it is constricting and negative. The mechanism that ensures this phenomenon is the creation of a 'special agency' (Freud, 1984, 258) within the ego as 'one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, [and] judges it critically' (Freud, 1984, 256), replacing potential reproaches against the lost external object with internal self-accusations. It was in writing of melancholia, indeed, that Freud began to address the nature of what he would eventually call the superego (Lear, 2015, ch.6). If we think about how melancholia might affect the person who has been victimised or violated, by another, what might this look like?

Here is Madeleine Black's account of the psychological effects of a rape upon her as a young teenage girl:

When I was 13, in a flat belonging to my friend's mother who was away for the weekend, I was attacked by two teenage American students. They held a knife to my throat and tortured and raped me many times over, for about four or five hours. I begged them to stop, but they just kicked me and laughed at me. I remember wishing they would kill me to make it all end. Near to the end one of my attackers urinated on me and out of everything they

did, this felt the worse and it was one of the images that haunted me for years to come. Before they left, the most violent of the pair punched me in the chest, held the knife to my throat again and said if I told anyone he would find me and kill me. I believed him. ... I lived in fear that the two young men who had raped me would kill me one day. I felt worthless, totally degraded, and empty. I thought it was all my fault, and most of all I felt so dirty and contaminated. I would spend ages in the bath for many years afterwards scrubbing my skin with cleaning products.... I started to become very promiscuous as I had no self-respect and if a boy approached me I just let him do whatever he wanted because I thought if I resisted he would hurt me. At the same time I started drinking and taking drugs. I also stopped eating as that was the only thing I felt I could control. (Black, 2015, 63-4)

Here, the violation's effects are not just a loss that needs to be absorbed and overcome in a process of mourning, though that is a part of it. The victim also 'takes in' a sense of her own worthlessness, deduced from how she has been treated, and permits it to structure her mental self-perception, with profound effects for how she then lives her life. This is melancholia brought about by violation in action.

From this point of view, the words and actions of Violeta Berrios, Vicky Saavedra and Valentina Rodriguez may be seen not only as an insistence on their right to mourn, but a refusal to accept an understanding of their situation and what happened to them as no more than what they deserved. Treated as worthless by the state, there is a threefold violation of their being. First there was the initial acts of violation against their family members, their disappearance and murder; second, there was the subsequent hiding and re-hiding of the remains; and third, there is the refusal to come clean as to the whereabouts of the bodies, so that the women may mourn. Their struggles are accordingly actions not just in the way of mourning, but in the resistance of a sense of themselves as people unworthy of the dignity that comes with the reassertion of wholeness through and after the work of mourning. To accept such a sense of themselves would be to run the risk of accepting the state's

treatment and implicit understanding of them as worthless. To struggle to mourn is also to fight against and to refuse to see themselves in melancholic terms.

Mourning or Melancholia?

In the Introduction to a collection of essays on loss, mourning and remains, David Eng and David Kasanjian follow Walter Benjamin in writing of the importance of 'active mourning' as a means of establishing an active and open relationship with history. The attention to physical and other kinds of remains 'generates a politics of mourning that might be active' (Eng and Kasanjian, 2002, 2), and not wrapped up in the complaisant hegemony of history's present victors. But what does mourning entail? This raises for them the question underlying this essay, that of the relationship between mourning and melancholia, and they wonder whether Freud's distinction between the two holds in anything like the way he thought. Their discussion helps us clarify the two terms, and what is happening in *Nostalgia For The Light*, so is considered here.

For Eng and Kasanjian, Freud's account in 'Mourning and Melancholia' is problematic because he treats mourning as normal, while he pathologises melancholia, and, more specifically, because in his account mourning closes and kills. It 'abandons lost objects by laying their histories to rest', while melancholia in contrast is the state which 'creates a realm of traces open to signification, a hermeneutic domain of what remains of loss' (Eng and Kasanjian, 2002, 4). 'Unlike mourning, in which the past is declared resolved, finished, and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present' (Eng and Kasanjian, 2002, 3-4), and therefore the way to an open future politics. If this were the way to distinguish the two terms in Freud, it is hard to see how he could assist Benjamin in thinking through the idea of active *mourning*, and for Eng and Kasanjian, it is melancholia that must play the active role, for it alone goes beyond 'a fixed notion of the past [in favour of] a continuous engagement with loss and its remains' (Eng and Kasanjian, 2002, 4).

That mourning and melancholia are interconnected is unquestionable, but Eng and Kasanjian both overstate the deadly purpose of mourning and understate the genuinely pathologizing quality of

melancholia, in its negative attack on subjectivity. Loewald develops Freud's account in a way that helps us see more clearly its significance for both terms. For Loewald, the work of mourning is about developing and enriching identity through a subsequent holding of the past in a way that enables growth and does not close off relevance, while it is melancholia that leaves the person caught in the circumstances of the loss:

When we speak of the internalisation of object relations, such as in the resolution of the Oedipus complex and in the work of mourning, it is not, if the processes are brought to completion, a matter of maintaining identification with the objects to be relinquished; the latter is the case in melancholia where the object and the identifications with the object cannot be given up. In internalization it is a matter of transforming these relations [by] increasing and enriching psychic structure. (Loewald, 1980, 83)

In this account, mourning does not kill or close, for successful completion and relinquishing are transformations, increases, and enrichments carried forward in an enhanced and open psychic structure. Melancholia on the other hand represents the kind of stasis Eng and Kasanjian impute to mourning in Freud.

Neither Freud nor Loewald had in mind the kinds of experiences of violation seen in *Nostalgia For The Light*, though Freud was clear that mourning extended beyond the personal and into the social.⁸ In this setting, their contrast between an enriched and an impoverished ego structure around mourning and melancholia needs to be maintained. The three women we have focused on need to mourn in the ways described: to cradle a detached, decomposing, foot in its burgundy sock, to know lost parents and what kind of people they were. The beauty of a brother's smile, the proud love of hopeful young parents, these become a part of Vicky Saavedra's and Valentina Rodriguez's lives and enriches their present at least to a limited extent. At the same time their struggle *to mourn* as a

⁸ Mourning is the reaction to the loss of a loved person, 'or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (Freud, 1984, 252).

creative and demanding political process should be recognised, and honoured. The resistance displayed in the desert is animated by mourning and not melancholia; rather it represents the fight against it. There is a refusal to accept or 'take in' a self-definition based on 'being slighted, neglected or disappointed' (Freud, 1984, 260), and, of course, so much more: being violated, ignored, treated with contempt, like lepers, as Violeta Berrios says in the film.

Through the need to mourn and to contest its denial the women in the desert keep a critical politics alive that would otherwise be lost to a melancholy future. In a brief Afterword to Eng and Kasanjian's collection, Judith Butler is close to the mark when she writes, again in connection with Walter Benjamin, that melancholia involves a deadening of the emotions pursuant to the failure of mourning. On a recent visit to Chile, I was told more than once that ordinary people no longer show a commitment to politics that involves any sense of social solidarity, but focus on their work and immediate family. There is a shutting down of communication. That, it was suggested, was Pinochet's continuing influence on the society. If true, then this is the kind of deadening of discourse, melancholia in action, which comes from an acceptance of the failure properly to mourn: to take on and to enrich through the experience of loss. With Violeta Berrios, Vicky Saavedra and Valentina Rodriguez, one thing that is not lost is the vitality of the emotions, and that is why theirs is a struggle both *to* mourn and *against* melancholia. Butler muses that the distinction between mourning and melancholia may not ultimately hold because they are 'experienced in a certain configuration of simultaneity and succession' (Eng and Kasanjian, 2002, 472). This seems rather a reason to maintain than to discard the distinction. That the relationship between the two terms can generate such a configuration surely indicates a productive pairing. That it can illuminate the experience of the women in Guzman's *Nostalgia* is also a good reason to maintain it.

IDENTIFICATION AND AESTHETICS IN *NOSTALGIA*

As mentioned above, Guzman's *Nostalgia For The Light* offers perspectives on the Atacama desert and its place in human history across time, but also its place in the universe as a whole.

Aesthetically, the film could not be more beautifully shot, with views of the desert and of the universe, and these pictures are matched with a plangent soundtrack that soars and also enhances the experience. The word 'gorgeous' in the film's blurb is a slightly over-indulgent word in many contexts, but not here.

These aspects along with other filmic techniques, including the 'haptic' quality, as Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (2109) puts it, of the depiction of the immediacy of sight and sound in the desert – the scrape of tools, the sound of wind across the desert floor, wind interacting with human artefacts, the acuity of colour, all establish the position of the women of the Atacama as involved in a struggle that has the universe on their side. It is not until the film's second half that the women in fact appear, but this decentering only makes their struggle the more central – not just to the film, but to the universe itself.

If mourning and the resistance to melancholia are both about the possibility for identification and human wholeness, or at-one-ment, the film is itself a part of the struggle to achieve it. The *longue duree* of human history, the special quality of the Atacama desert in the earthly world, the link to the galaxies it enables, the sheer beauty of the images and the accompanying music, all indicate a sense of macrocosmic wholeness that goes far beyond, but also includes, the microcosmic struggle for dignity and human rights of Pinochet's victims. The film presents a personal struggle over identification and atonement, for mourning and against melancholia, as a struggle that has both literally and figuratively universal elements. These, the film indicates, are on the side of the struggle to mourn, because they are part and parcel of it. Identification and atonement are affirmed as at once personal, political and universal. Here we can return to Valentina's comment that

Astronomy has somehow helped me to give another dimension to the pain, to the absence, to the loss. Sometimes, when one is alone with that pain, and these moments are necessary,

[it] becomes oppressive. I tell myself it's all part of a cycle ... we are all part of a current, of an energy, a recyclable matter. Like the stars which must die [What] happened to my parents ... takes on another dimension ... and frees me a little

This comment, I think, is pivotal to the film, summarising its universal message and what it seeks to achieve. The women must mourn and resist melancholia, and the film is aesthetically on their side. On a personal level, Guzman makes the same point when he introduces the film with memories of his own childhood and the happiness of a Chile before the dictators. From that point of view, *Nostalgia For The Light* is also *his* act of mourning. In contrast to his earlier work, some criticise the film as being apolitical, but the search of the women is not apolitical, for mourning violations brought about by the state means re-achieving wholeness through activities that necessarily call the state to account.⁹ Refusing melancholia maintains the space for mourning to occur. To be sure, the film's aesthetic ambition contrasts with Guzman's earlier black and white documentary style presentations, but this is politics by other means, not its abandonment. Struggle over identification and atonement for mourning and against melancholia with regard to politically motivated violence can only ultimately be a political act.

⁹ For a brief overview of Guzman's work prior to *Nostalgia*, and an interview with the director, see White (2012). In contrast to the view expressed here, White sees *Nostalgia* as an exercise in melancholia, since he sees it as communicating how 'abuses of power are gradually, numbingly accepted'. He considers Valentina's words (quoted above) about her children as 'an even sadder expression of the national tragedy than silence and stony faces' (how her grandparents are portrayed in the film) (White, 2012, 3-4). Yet, White's interview with Guzman reveals a man committed to working with memory and against its denial, and to engagement with a new generation of Chileans who want to learn about a suppressed past history. For them, Guzman says, 'I'm not old and there's a meeting point and a rapport'. Melancholia is the fate of the previous 'lost' generation, who grew up in the coup's shadow, 'many of whom detest me' (White, 2012, 6).

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