

The psychology of nations

By Dr. Margret Rueffler - 16 October 2008

Working with Manhattan's multicultural population in my New York psychotherapeutic practice, through the years I have encountered clients of many different nationalities and religions. This has afforded me deep insights into the psyches of clients of various nationalities including Jewish ones and even children of holocaust survivors, often of Polish, German, and Russian descent.

One specific therapy session with a young Jewish man whose father came from Germany got me in touch with my theretofore unconscious German national heritage of World War Two and the holocaust.

German-American, born at the end of that war, this came as a genuine surprise to me, especially since the war had taken place before I was born. Exploring this, I found that my personal German heritage moved me deeply. For several years I struggled to accept my previously unacknowledged and unknown guilt and embarrassment of being German.

Recognizing and personally experiencing that inherited psychological pattern allowed me to understand the influence of collective patterns and traumata on the individual as well as the reciprocal influence each individual asserts, via thoughts and actions, on the collective. This influence can be either negative or positive. Once conscious, one has the freedom to choose the way s/he influences their own and collective patterns as well as the resulting national ones.

Clearly, the awareness and recognition of the deep wounds in the soul of a nation caused by the trauma of war (victims and oppressors alike both suffer) afforded me the opportunity to view the behaviour of a nation from quite a different perspective.

The Psychology of Nations: the Model and the Theory grew organically over years of personal experience and application, years which allowed me to research and explore behavioural and international patterns, prevention, and the healing of national traumata and to understand national collective processes. The Psychology of Nations is a wider framework for multiple applications of this awareness which are currently being researched and developed. They are taught theoretically and can be experienced as well.

What is the Psychology of Nations? As a "New Psychology" it is an emerging perspective, a holistic model which views the individual as an intricate part of a national collective. The collective in turn (seen here as a group with the same cultural, religious and linguistic background) is embedded in the consciousness of humanity as a whole. This perception allows one to view it as a living system bound by its own respective laws.

A nation's psychological heritage, individual as well as collective, is lived and expressed in the nation's current concerns, activities, and choices. The understanding of the interconnectedness of the individual and the collective and the power of the individual to influence that collective are basic to the transformation of the national collective unconscious. More, this very understanding brings with it an appreciation of the importance of individual choice and the assessment of the laws and principles which govern a nation's development. In short, the complexity, the cycles, and the rhythms of psychopolitical events can and should become conscious.

The Psychology of Nations is based on the inner attitude of honoring the "Self" with its inherent developmental and evolutionary potential as the center and depth of an individual as well as of nations. This allows for the healthy integration of individuals into their respective nations and into the constellation

of humanity and the planet itself. This new inner awareness can and inevitably will transform deeply rooted national patterns and lead to changes in the quality of life both of the individual and the collective, allowing them to grow and cooperate in harmony and in alignment with humanity as a whole.

Application: The Psychology of Nations is introducing PsychoPolitical Action Projects, working on location with multi-ethnic groups for the prevention and treatment of violence and collective traumata based on the psychological principles of

Compassion

Empowerment

Choice

Self-Help

in combination with psychological, emotional, financial and material support, and skills training. These projects are applied on location in cooperation with individuals and with sponsoring organizations.

(Healing a Collective, 1994 - 1998, Bakuriani, Rep. of Georgia)

(Can Collective Violence Be Prevented?, 1999 - 2002, Bali, Indonesia)

The Psychology of Nations researches the national psyche as a living system, its development, psychopolitical history, collective traumata and national consciousness within humanity as a whole. Prevention of violence, assessment of multi-ethnic tensions, their mechanisms and how they develop are emphasized.

The Psychology of Nations can be experienced in seminars which familiarize the participants with the values of compassion, empowerment, choice and self help and which ultimately lead to a new inner attitude.

(Die Ermächtigung des Einzelnen, das Kollektiv zu verändern, etc.)

The Psychology of Nations includes several different areas all of which are applications of this model of consciousness such as PsychoPolitical Action Projects, research and theory, psychological intervention teams et. al, and are all based on the aforementioned values of compassion, empowerment, choice and self help.

Dr. Margret Rueffler, a transpersonal psychologist, is the founder of the PsychoPolitical Peace Institute of New York, USA, and of Staefa, Switzerland. For more than twenty years she has developed and researched "The Psychology of Nations" and trains people both locally and internationally. In addition, she has published books which have been translated into several languages.

PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation