

Alternative Approaches to Terrorism in the Context of Art

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Abstract

The ease of motivation has always been alluring within existential efforts of the individual who has been cut off from his/her history and cultural life, and lost in his/her solitude. This fact is grounded on the preconditions eliminating the social and cultural identity data of the individual, and by no means providing the choice of cognitive competence in the societies/communities aimed to be motivated. Desiring to cut off the links between social life and the individual, who is first alienated with himself/herself, later with the society, leads the individual to postpone social responsibilities and creates the context only convenient for codification. The preemptive precautions against terror, as a support for security measures, have to be conducted simultaneously in the economic, political, social, cultural, spiritual spheres. The prescription for a solution to this violence-centered tendency targeting innocent people is possible only through such precautions supporting each other. Otherwise, the darkness of terror will inevitably overshadow the inner dynamics of the individual as well as the social dynamics in which the individual is involved. The function of art as a whole of emotional expressions during the process of creating emotional makeup of the society stands out with its society-shaping role. Thus, the individual's emotions are fed through art and his/her opposition against violence is naturally restructured. Art, supporting the individual's process of emotional development, also sets the setting for the individual's emancipation and investigation into events through the privilege of free expression it provides. This transformation poses an opposition to the unquestioned state of submission. Artistic sensitivity acquired by the individual liberated through art and emotionally nurtured will enable him/her to isolate terror- and violence-related phenomena from his/her life to be constructed in a more harmonious and balanced way. Education is the most basic human right to avoid the risk of motivation in today's world, but the low chances of academic education for an individual deprived of education opportunities put forward the idea of education through art. Emotional and cognitive richness acquired throughout the efficient process of artistic education could contribute to the process of self-development by improving the individual's ability to perceive abstract concepts and developing the skills to associate objects with each other. However, during the process of restructuring through social consciousness raising, selecting the artistic activities which are familiar to the society, in compliance with cultural makeup and social identity will provide an efficient and effective use of the process within organisations involved in art and education through art. Underlining the potential in the effective power of art on human life which could create a well-qualified social life, the present study will question the function of art, an phenomenon existing with its ability to strengthen social relations, in dealing with a structure like terror, completely opposite in content, drawing upon the privilege of cognitive consciousness in art.

Introduction

The ease of motivation has always been alluring within existential efforts of the individual who has been cut off from his/her history and cultural life, and lost in his/her solitude. This fact is grounded on the fulfillment of the preconditions eliminating the social and cultural identity data of the individual, and by no means providing the choice of cognitive competence in the societies/communities aimed to be motivated.

Desiring to cut off the links between social life and the individual, who is first alienated with himself/herself, later with the society, leads the individual to postpone social responsibilities and creates the context only convenient for codification. The endeavours of the capitalist bourgeois society to metamorphose² the individual susceptible to exploitation through alienation from his/her consciousness, so to speak, support the decomposition and polarisation processes of societies.

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²Tanilli, S. (2006). Uygurluk Tarihi. İstanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 123.

The tendency of revolt inherent the individual who has been emotionally and intellectually isolated and segregated is now replaced by subjection, only developing the necessity of obedience as isolated from the logical approaches.

The state of submission caused by the suppressed individual paves the way for an emotional explosion, whereas the process of task performance with violence content, due to its convenience for explosion, assumes a compensatory function in the individual's ability to deal with suppression.

Although they may have similarities in content, an act of terror, attributed to implications of "deterrence and intimidation"³ in Turkish -transcending an ordinary act of crime, or inner conflicts that are attempted to be escalated within the society and those of wars at the international level- has a politically reactionary nature equivalent to atrocity, which is ferociously constructed and directly targeted at innocent people.

To define terrorism in James D. Derian's words, "As verb, code and historical method, terrorism has consistently been understood as an act of symbolically intimidating and, if deemed necessary, violently eradicating a personal, political, social, ethnic, religious, ideological or otherwise radically differentiated foe. Yet, as noun, message and catch-all political signifier, the meaning of terrorism has proven more elusive."⁴

As for terror attacks, they are "forms of social and cultural disasters that cause extensive harm to humans and the social order. Yet despite the sudden chaos they wreak and their prevalence during the last decade or so, most societies have only recently created organizational forms that can manage and handle their threatening potential."⁵

Use of peaceful practices and modalities with the same precision and continuity during the fight against terrorism, defined as "a systematic attitude and method in the use of violence so as to accomplish the political targets shared within an organised group or a party, individuals or minorities"⁶, involves promising characteristics with regard to the solution of problems. The presence of reciprocity between the two counterparts regarding the possible practices and modalities have a contributory role in the acquisition of success.

The problem of terror is fed through submission by the despairing individual who has been excluded due to his/her own origin, deprived of job and education opportunities as well as accompanied by his/her unfulfilled expectations of security, and the result is the individual's inability to resist against impositions from organisations. However, the solution requires a long process, which is ignored or delayed, thus bringing about the necessity to come up with short-term solutions. The preemptive precautions against terror, as a support for security measures, have to be conducted simultaneously in the economic, political, social, cultural, spiritual spheres. The prescription for a solution to this violence-centered tendency targeting innocent people is possible only through such precautions supporting each other. Otherwise, the darkness of terror will inevitably overshadow the inner dynamics of the individual as well as the social dynamics in which the individual is involved.

Marx's conception of violence in his statement that violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one⁷, so to speak, nourishes the assumption that violence has its origins in human nature. However, instead of generalising such a perception on the social ground, what should be highlighted is developing the individual's skills in coping with his/her emotions and underlining the good inside the individual's personality. It is at this point that art comes into prominence as an indispensable phenomenon.

In contrast to Delillo's perception claiming that "we are influenced less and less by art as we witness terror more and more visibly"⁸, it would be more acceptable to point out terror's loss of power in its effectiveness within a society shaped by artistic sensitivity.

³Örgün, F. (2001). Küresel Terör. İstanbul: Okumuş Adam Yayınları, 13.

⁴Derian, J. (Ed.). (2005). *Imaging Terror: Logos, Pathos and Ethos*. Third World Quarterly. (Vol.26, No.1.). Taylor & Francis, Ltd, 23.

⁵Stadler, N., Ben-arı, E., Mesterman, E. (Eds.). (2005). "Terror, Aid and Organization: The Haredi Disaster Victim Identification Teams (ZAKA) in Israel. *Anthropological Quarterly*. (Vol. 78, No.3.). George Washington University Ethnographic Studies Institute, 619.

⁶Cevizci, A. (2005). *Felsefe Sözlüğü*. (6th ed.). İstanbul: Paradigma Yayıncılık, 1615.

⁷Keane, J. (1996). *Şiddetin Uzun Yüzyılı*. Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 18,

⁸Lenttrichia, F., McAuliffe, J. (2004). *Katiller, Sanatçılar ve Teröristler*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 18.

This aesthetic sensitivity in arts, acquired by the individual liberated through art and nurtured in the emotional sense, will enable him/her to isolate terror- and violence-related phenomena from his/her life to be constructed in a more harmonious and balanced way.

The function of art as a whole of emotional expressions during the process of creating emotional makeup of the society stands out with its society-shaping role. Thus, the individual's emotions are fed through art and his/her opposition against violence is naturally restructured. As Baynes suggests, "Art affects the lives of individuals living in the society, which determines the probable content and function of art." Thus, the point to which this network is connected is where the 'artist' and the 'things created by the artists' stand."⁹ Art, supporting the individual's process of emotional development, also sets the setting for the individual's emancipation and investigation into events through the privilege of free expression it provides. This transformation poses an opposition to the unquestioned state of submission.

Education is the most basic human right to avoid the risk of motivation in today's world, but the low chances of academic education for an individual deprived of education opportunities put forward the idea of education through art. Emotional and cognitive richness acquired throughout the efficient process of artistic education could contribute to the process of self-development by improving the individual's ability to perceive abstract concepts and developing the skills to associate objects with each other.

However, during the process of restructuring through social consciousness raising, selecting the artistic activities which are familiar to the society, in compliance with cultural makeup and social identity will provide an efficient and effective use of the process within organisations involved in art and education through art.

Artistic education shaped through the social environment into which the individual is born and the cultural background the individual gains over time will both ensure breaking of the resistance by enclave societies against novelties and accelerating the process of access to the target.

"People who are most familiar with a war that is unjust, disobedient to rules and nasty, ravaged against individuals, cutting them off from their own nature are those who are subject to that war."¹⁰ In this context, the environment of peace, which is of great value to anyone, is more important and yearned for those who experience war and violence because of the destruction and weariness caused by the war. At this point, the effort for warding off the environment of war complements the effort for sustaining peace. Considering art and the artist shaping artistic education, with their support to the social effort in question, they shoulder the mission of accelerating the process of access to the common target.

In pursuit of ensuring the sustainability of national solidarity, the initiatives paving the way for national awakening and taken by "the intellectuals with specific places, such as musicians, artists and authors, in the strengthening of nationalist roots as well as the creation of national identity"¹¹ are based on their consciousness over the fulfillment of the potential power in question.

Art, which enables the individual to cope with his/her infinite solitude and helps him/her cater to the tendency of social integration, in a sense, accompanies the person in this state of loneliness by providing the opportunity to transcend oneself. Thus, by witnessing other lives through art, the individual can seize the possibility of integration with the whole and interpret himself/herself as a part of that whole.

The desire to nullify the memory of society through ignorance by veiling the visible experiences stands out as one of the highly effective means among the new ways of formalization that are imposed in the society. However, ignorance of the problems rather than their treatment paves the way for them to get even worse and stuck in a deadlock, leaving profound traces behind the collective consciousness. This result assumes a locomotive function not only in losing the perception of, but also deepening the trauma that is being felt within the society.

⁹Baynes, K. (2004), *Toplumda Sanat*. (Y. Atılgan, Trans.). Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 28.

¹⁰Kültür-Sanat Konferansı Tebliği. (2008). *Sanat Estetik Politika*. Istanbul: Sorun Yayınları, 189.

¹¹Çoban, Barış. (Ed.). (2009). *Medya Milliyetçilik Şiddet*. Istanbul: Su Yayınları, 75.

The West interpreted the working class, whose labour power was required and purchased via the immigrant population during the economic development period in the Western world, as second-class people who were temporarily involved into the western life for the sake of social interests commonly held by the Westerners, considering the fact that these immigrants were to be tolerated for some time. However, the effective roles acquired by the second and third generations in social life have proven themselves to be the potential power catering to the need for young population in this geographical area. Accordingly, the requirement for use of this power has also revealed the necessity of reformation of the existing perceptions.

The difference in perceptions has naturally brought together the need for adapting immigrants, looking forward to their returns, into the social life. Within this framework, there have been attempts to ensure the development of young people as well as their abstinence from violence- and addiction- based tendencies through projects, albeit for short periods.

The sense of belongingness required by the individual during the identity search, the desire for self-realisation and the necessity of proving oneself in the social environment can all be satisfied through educational programmes with artistic content presented to the society with certain periods of time, and thus the individual can be saved for the society. A social life held in balance through art also involves the elimination of adaptation problems that may be accompanying the individual's inner conflicts.

Together with this awareness and consciousness within the framework of adaptation projects, the project called "Buluşma", which was launched in 2008 in the Netherlands (Holland) with the collaboration of ZIMIHC, the Cultural House for Amateur Arts (Utrecht), Culturalis Theatre (Den Haag), International Dance Theatre (Amsterdam) and the government, stands out as a well-prepared, long-running study that has been conveyed to the masses of people.

The effective outcomes of the project, which was initially intended to be implemented from 2008 to 2012, have also brought onto the agenda the issue of lengthening the duration of the project until 2018. This project has been built upon Turkish Folk Dances and directed by Ahmet Demirbağ, a lecturer at the Department of Turkish Folk Dances in the Conservatory of Turkish Music, Istanbul Technical University. The target people for the project called "Buluşma" involve not only the Turkish people living in Holland, but also the natives there. Such a synthesis extend the meaning and value of the project, as well as its contributions.

In search for a solution to the main problem among Turks in Holland as to where they belong to as the minority people of the social environment in which they live, their performance experience is quite a privileged opportunity, following a training period of art classes which they attend simultaneously in the same classes together with citizens of the host country. Especially inclusion of these minority people's cultural values into the mentioned training programme in arts accelerate the solution process regarding the possible problems. Hence, behavioural disorders caused by biculturalism, the psychology of being a minority or the sense of being insufficient triggering marginal inclinations may turn out to be the kind of problems that can be dealt with. This training process, activated at the stage of consciousness raising in terms of feeling the responsibility over each other as a requirement of the group psychology, deserves to have the quality of a unique potion thanks to the understanding of solidarity for a common target.

The critical attitude in the past concerning the exclusion policies toward Turkish workers, given the current circumstances, poses an opposition to today's attitude toward the citizens from the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey. The critique of exclusion requires the elimination of local discrimination, which also reveals the condition that discrimination of classes and cultures should not be downplayed as in the case of geographical discrimination, resulting in the provision of all kinds of services in the egalitarian sense. However, social gaps raised by some certain factors seem to have established the European-immigrant opposition, making it almost parallel to the Westerner-Easterner opposition of Anatolia.

In pursuit of the attempts to disregard such an opposition, the adaptation projects of the West have also been alluring in terms of their efficiency and applicability. The young individual, who is presented the freedom of expression through the initiatives in the context of projects with artistic content, will have been provided with the opportunity of integration into the social life via the creation of a way out of the deadlock.

Accompanied by the moderate environment created within the social structure to which one belongs with his/her own free will rather than imposed identities, the individual, who finds the privilege of recognising himself/herself and his/her values, will also manage to seize the opportunity to shape his/her original identity through this awareness. At this point, cultural values, through their mission of conserving the social life and continuously sustaining its potential quality, will be able to bring an end to the individual's search for alternatives regarding violence.

Throughout the process of identity acquisition with their free will, placing the emphasis on other identities held by those young individuals who are exposed to a systematic way of persuasion and influence in their acts of violence, aimed for the fulfillment of some other interests, has always been a negligible attitude in that it refers to the implication that these individuals are not terrorists.¹²

From this aspect, the youth period, in which the process of identity acquisition is not completed yet, stands out as a critical stage and constitutes the formation of a target. Thus, it is this awareness that makes an obligatory step for a conscious selection and applicability of the policies that are determined during the fight against the formations of violence. Ensuring protection of the youth at stake throughout this construction process is made possible only through such conscious policies and projects.

Conclusion

Art is shaped by the influential power of cultural accumulations upon the internal life, and sprung from the society, it assumes a highly striking function in social consciousness raising. In contrast to the Western imperialist approach of the past, one could encounter quite a reasonable solution in the present attitude of the West figuring the minorities with their own cultural values rather than ambitions for a radical, social change in the society-shaping process created with this awareness in mind. Unlike the compelling understandings of external realities, the profoundly influential power of artistic practice, constituting a prerequisite for social and cultural life, can actually be activated upon solution of the problems, which are admittedly human, without reference to politics. Art and projects with artistic content have been preferable in terms of liberating power for the creation of a moderate environment by disregarding every mode of polarisation.

The weapon of eradicating prejudices shaped by the efforts for enemy-creation is directly related to the condition of familiarity. While love and tolerance can be achieved through familiarity and interaction with each other, this privilege is the precondition of a proper perception liberated from prejudices. Therefore, social eventualities and perceptions intended to be diverted take the privilege of creating their own interpretations of what exists in reality, rather than of what is intended to exist.

During the transformation of identity conflicts, pertaining to the individuals in society with fragmented personalities, into social conflicts, artistic education, in terms of its provision of cognitive competence and possible short-term experiences for the individual, is the key to the solution of problems as an alternative to academic education. Implementation of projects with artistic content overlapping with the cultural ground of society is also a way of relief both in the emotional and spiritual sense for the native community that is tired of being on the agenda because of terror.

Art, which makes an infinite power of imagination through free will, has existed with a potential function that may, in fact, ensure the liberation of society, thanks to the opportunities presented by the individuals in that society to express themselves in a free manner. In contrast to the understanding that strives to keep the young out of political realities through art, the aim here must be to raise those young individuals with consciousness and artistic sensitivity, taking pleasure from the environment of peace that promotes freedom, which is to be formed by social integration with the help of art. The key to the attainment of such a target lies in highlighting the similarities intended to be downplayed in a systematic way and generalizing them on the social ground, instead of deepening the divides in between. Cultural synthesis and cooperation as alternatives of othering, should be the main target.

¹²Bilir, H. (2009). *Terör Medya ve Devlet*. Istanbul: IQ Yayınları, 27.

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