

*Without the treatment of perpetrator introjects, we will never stop the cycle of violence within ourselves and in society.*

Speaker

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**Dr. Ralf Vogt**

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Psychoanalyst/traumatologist,  
author of multiple books on  
transgenerational violence



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# The transgenerational transmission of violence

## Dr. Ralf Vogt on the importance of treating perpetrator introjects with victims

*We are excited to announce **Dr. Ralf Vogt** will speak about the “transgenerational dimensions of violence” at the European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics in Amsterdam, 2025.*

### Dr. Ralf Vogt

Dr. Ralf Vogt is specialised in treating psychotrauma with a psychoanalytic approach. For over 15 years, he has theorised how perpetrator energy can be taken over and passed on towards others. One of his books is “Perpetrator Introjects: Psychotherapeutic Diagnostics and Treatment Models”. Oscar, the founder of the Peace Conference, was excited to learn about the way Ralf maps the transmission of perpetrator energy.

### What makes you interested in transgenerational violence?

“In Europe, we have lots of perpetrator-victim knots to solve. While France and the United Kingdom could see themselves as survivors of the Second World war, the Germans had this double sided sword. On the one hand, we were the perpetrators, as we had started the war and lots of cruelties had been committed in Germany’s name. On the other hand, we Germans have been bombed, shot and looked down upon as well. We thus ended up as being both a perpetrator and a victim. How do you integrate those two roles – with the perpetrator up and the victim down – within oneself?”

### How do perpetrator and victim sides live within us?

“This is easiest to understand with a case of rape. Of course, for 99%, I am a victim. It was done to me, right? Yet, the energy during the time of the rape and how often somebody did this to me, also impacts my psyche, even if it were for 1%. Involuntarily and unconsciously, this makes us push away our emotions. The lack of processing our fear however, makes that its energy gets stuck within ourselves. This is a psychological, physical, bodily and energetic imprint. Without due attention to this process of internalisation, we typically bring the initial perpetrator atmosphere with us, wherever we go. After all, when in a state of dissociation, we cross other people’s boundaries. Since the core problem with trauma is transgression, we become perpetrators for 1% as well.”

## How do you see these perpetrator-victim dynamics back in society?

“There are many sayings that legitimise and normalise the passing on of our earlier experiences of being a victim. For example, we say “what doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger” and “a bit of violence is needed for raising children, it never harmed anyone”. It can also be when politicians say evil things and then claim that “it was only a joke” or deny saying it. Such transmissions through language are frozen introjects that normalise violent interactions. Sayings, corresponding behaviours, and their energetic impacts, we can copy and pass onwards. In fact, we may even end up declaring ourselves as the wrongdoers, and therewith deny the perpetrator parts, the violence, and repetition of war from those around us.”

## What makes it difficult to talk about perpetrator introjections?

“Since 2006 I had talks with many of my colleagues about the importance of treating perpetrator introjections when treating victims of interpersonal violence. Dutch colleagues would generally say “no, our patients are not perpetrators, they at most have perpetrator imitating parts”. They found my approach too analytical. In that sense, as a psychotherapeutic community, I would say, we have come far. We are often trained in talking about victim experiences with clients, yet, the difficulty of treating perpetrator introjects –and the resulting transgressions– were never taken seriously. Let me give an example. When victims experience a strong internal shame, by having that part in us, we carry the energy of the perpetrator. Of course, this atmospheric transference is not the whole personality of a person and the resulting personality disturbance is never the mistake of the victim. Yet, we are – even when we are a victim of someone else – responsible for what we do with this internalised energy today. We may not be the perpetrator, yet we do show perpetrator behaviours by crossing other people’s boundaries. What I think will happen if we do not treat perpetrator introjections? After three or four generations, we will end up in war again.”



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*Psychotherapists have often been trained to work with the traumatic victim sides of their clients. Yet, what do they do with the perpetrator introjects of their clients? What do they do with suicidal imaginations and other acts of violence that victims may commit as well?*



## What does war have to do with perpetrator-victim dynamics?

“Violence is a specific problem. It’s a human-made disaster. The outcome of that is perpetrator and victim parts. We often like to think, both as patients and therapists, that “I’m only the victim”. Yet, seeing the whole truth, also our perpetrator introjects, were sometimes difficult. In general, I would say that there are three processes we can see across generations: we suppress, split, and repeat. The first generation says “never again”. They say “stop”. They want to avoid it at all costs. While we thought back in the days, that the distance to the war, would make it go away, that this would calm our body down, unfortunately, from psychotrauma research in the last 45 years, we know that this is not true. Like in physics, energy will never disappear. Like a stone falling on the floor, it’s energy does not go away, but transforms. Similarly, with people witnessing murders, they may not become killers as well. That is too simplistic. Yet, depression may transform into aggression, which may eventually result in violence. Its energy goes under the surface. It transforms our behaviour, feeling, thinking and handling of any situation. The result of not feeling our trauma is that it can go into our body, for example creating cancer. While this energy may be directed inwards, it may also be directed outwards, towards others. Instead of dealing with the underlying psychotrauma, we confuse the trauma source with those around us. Since we feel provoked by the other, they must be the source of our pain, right? This second generation thus splits into things they hate and love. We typically feel powerless and put our eggs in the basket of misleading omnipotent and manic leaders who say that they can be trusted. Our belly then makes us a society that wrongly thinks that war may be a good idea.”

*Trauma results from perpetrator transgression. If this perpetrator energy goes unprocessed, it will transform. This can be inwards (through suicidal ideation) or outward (via destructive acts) with others. We need to think about: How do we stop this cycle of intergenerational violence?*

## So what makes working with perpetrator introjections key in therapy?

“Victims often have very conflicting experiences. For example, with suicidal clients, they want to kill themselves. Others are traumatised but beat their children. Generally, aggression does not come to an end with people who are not treated for their perpetrator introjects. I would thus say that, in order to make therapeutic treatment more whole, we need to include these under-currents and unconscious influences that make our reality obfuscated, that we misinterpret the people around us with the psychotrauma we seek to avoid.”

## Recommended books

- *Vogt, R. (Ed.) (2012). Perpetrator Introjects - Psychotherapeutic Diagnostics and Treatment Models. Kröning: Asanger.*
- *Vogt, R. (Ed.) (2015). SPIM 30. Treatment Model for Dissociative Trauma Disorders. Kröning: Asanger Verlag*
- *Vogt, R. (Ed.) (2019). The Traumatized Memory – Protection and Resistance. How traumatic stress encrypts itself in the body, behaviour, and soul, and how to detect it. Berlin: Lehmanns Media.*
- *Vogt, R. (Ed.) (2022). Confusion, Splitting, Shame & Guilt in Man-Made Psychotraumas. Complex Traumatization & Identity Disorders in Treatment. Berlin: Lehmanns Media.*
- *Vogt, R. (Hrsg.) (2024). Transgenerationale Gewalt. Weshalb unbehandelte Traumata in familiäre Tyrannei und sozialen Extremismus münden können. Berlin: Lehmanns Media.*

Want to learn more? Join us in person or online.

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# European Peace Conference on Perpetrator-Victim Dynamics

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"We are not at war, but not at peace either," said the new NATO Chief, Mark Rutte. "If you want peace, prepare for war." Is Europe at a crossroad towards more polarisation, identity politics, and war? Reflections on our human nature may help us find a sensible way forward.

At this year's peace conference, the first of its kind, an international group of scholars, experts and practitioners, will seek ways to explore how perpetrator-victim dynamics run through our lives, families, business and politics.

With guest lectures, workshops, personal and group reflections, we seek to embody the latest expertise from the research on war and peace.

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