

NEW CLINIC, NEW CHALLENGES FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Current clinical practice brings us face to face with problems which, to a large extent, do not fall within the framework of the ways of dealing with the conflict typical of classical neurosis. It is not a matter of the returns of the repressed, typical of the formations of the unconscious, but rather of modes of expression that slide towards the body and action with phantasmatic lapses and deficits of symbolisation.

New pathologies and/or new practices? This is the question.

A field of a clinic of the void opens up to us, and it is different from a clinic of lack. By the existence of a clinic of the void I am not trying to define a new structure, but a crucial aspect of the contemporary psychoanalytic practice. The so-called "**new symptoms**" (anorexia and bulimia, drug addictions, panic attacks, certain depressions) appear to be effectively irreducible to the logic that governs the neurotic constitution of the symptom. Practices of jouissance appear which seem to exclude the very existence of the unconscious, in the sense that this enjoyment does not involve the exchange with the Other sex. The clinic of the void deals with the forms of disconnection between the subject and the Other, the rejection of the Other marked by the fall of the place of the father and the structuring function of the Oedipus. The contemporary Other fosters the object plus of enjoyment which acquires the status of the Ideal in eclipse.

Faced with this new clinic, the subject needs listening and interventions, and "classical" measures and interventions prove to be insufficient.

The anxieties tend to be of a catastrophic nature, flooding an ego devoid of the anticipatory resources of the alarm signal. Where the possibility of representation is lacking, reproduction is triggered through action, and the body conquers the invisible territory of the soul.

Often, constant action, hyperactivity and vertigo constitute compulsive escapes from the threat of emptiness, which hinders the exercise of solitude, or as Winnicott would say "the capacity to be alone".

In the clinical situations to which the clinic of the void summons us, the analytical task must favour psychic complexification. It is no longer a matter of rendering the unconscious conscious but of operating on the fissures that have prevented the conflict from being able to make its returns through the pathways of the formations of the unconscious. It will be necessary to moderate the tendency to direct drive discharge and enable the transition to a mode of symbolic transcription.

The metaphor of liquidity is what characterizes the current phase of modernity (Zygmunt Bauman). The solids that are melting right now are the links between individual choices and collective actions. It is time for deregulation, for flexibility and for the liberalisation of all markets. There are no stable or determined guidelines. And when the public no longer exists as solid, the weight of pattern-building and the responsibility for failure fall totally and fatally on the individual.

Psychoanalysis is not exempt from the changes of the times. Eric Laurent says about classifications: (...) "Freud's first cases were very solid: Dora, the Rat Man and Petit Hans, then from 1909 onwards, things started to become complex, in 1918 we have the highly bizarre case of the "Wolf man". The case is not well structured and presents a mixture of obsessional neurosis with two adult delusional episodes... The clinic begins to overflow. Freud can no longer give his students a compass as surely as before. Lacan's work is based on the crisis of this extension (...)".

Because there is also a deconstruction of psychoanalysis, of a psychoanalysis that had found with Lacan the resource of structuralism and of which we can say, if we use the previous image, that it tends to become a liquid psychoanalysis; in any case this is a certain thread that I would like to follow: how psychoanalysis became liquid and how we practice it today in a form that is no longer, to put it very simply, the solid psychoanalysis of the times of the structure.

This logic permeates the question of the symptom in today's psychoanalytic clinic, a symptom that presents itself in a context of liquidity, of the fall of the great ideals, where subjects are at a loss. It is a clinic of urgency embedded in a context of generalised anguish and where the singularity of the subject tends to disappear..

It is a status of the jouissance far distant from love and from the unconscious phantasm, understanding as features of love the meaning that Lacan gave them and which involve the knotting of the three registers, namely, fascination for the image, the gift of what is not possessed and the substitution of the absence of the sexual relation. It is therefore an autistic jouissance. It is like a disconnection between the subject and the Other. Let us think of drugs, which serve as a mask for unconscious desire that remains more blurred than ever, disguised as a demand of the body. It is the triumph of Narcissus in liquid modernity.

The psychoanalysis that we practice today is presented in a context of liquidity and inconsistency of the Other. It is always about the Unconscious, which implies not inscribing traumatized subjects into large categories, but isolating the detail, the singularity, establishing the dimension of the symptom as a compass that guides us to locate the enjoyment it contains.

If the sexual relationship does not exist, if love cannot replace it and fulfil its idealised promises, if work in society enslaves people, there is certainly very little left for some, apart from void and despair. Faced with this, the way out, for some is enjoying without desiring, to step out of the game of exchange of words and seek a "model of love" whose paradigm would be that of the alcoholic with his bottle, a model of love that knows neither failures nor betrayals and where the control over that object is absolute. It is a hard dilemma because the symptom as a compromise formation between unconscious desire and the demands of the social other is not the central issue.

What remains is mainly emptiness and anguish. But it is a void dissociated from the lack, which expresses itself through a fragmentation and dispersion of the subject that leads to what Bion called nameless terror.

And what is the clinic for a psychoanalyst? It is not easy to talk about the clinic and to hold a testimonial space of what the direction of a cure consists of.

Isn't the clinic all about transforming psychic suffering into a narrative about which one can give one's opinion and think?

Psychoanalysis contains of course a methodology, a technique and a hermeneutics, but in my view it is above all a craft. The psychoanalyst's craft is an art.

In the face of psychic pain, I feel like a craftsman. Our patients' feelings of discomfort, despair, anguish and fear should bring us together rather than tear us apart. Pain, where are you, at the crossroads of body and psyche, of death and life?

Whom should we discover? I believe that it is the child crouching in the depths of the suffering man or woman who comes to us as analysts, the suffering child who, between the promise of childhood and the realisations of adult life, has found something more than the pitfalls of neurosis, psychosis or symptom-acts. Let's have the promise of a new gaze, unveiling the unusual in a daily basis, protection against falls and faith in the poetry of existence. It is necessary to communicate with that magical narcissistic child if we do not want to suffocate him. Assisting in the analysis to the expansion of this exchange is a moving experience; witnessing its failure, a tragedy.

When the work stagnates and the analyst risks losing his or her identity, it is necessary to invent something that the analyst can question. and also to find a new way of intervening.

A gesture instead of an interpretation, another way of listening and always a deep reflection on each psychoanalytic adventure that keeps alight the flame of hope for the subject drowned by anguish, that life is worth living.

Every human subject with its psychic complexity is a masterpiece, every analysis an odyssey.

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