

Psychoanalytical Clinic in Contemporaneity: Impasses and Redescriptions

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SYNOPSIS

Conceived in the neurosis clinical context, psychoanalysis has been gradually inquired by psychosis, perversion and autism's clinics. Today questions come from the psychosomatic, addiction, depression, melancholia and panic's clinics, from all these people who actually draw a new psychological suffering frame. This communication is an essay to find, in psychoanalytical field and elsewhere, cues which justify psychoanalysis in its actuality and use to describe and to approach human suffering distinct configurations and subjectivities in the context of our culture. Because, if among us psychoanalysts, it has been a growing concern, I ask myself if we may affirm that we build narratives which allow us "to positivate" new ways of existence. In my point of view, they are still described as deviations, as oppositions, as neurosis' contraries, a subjectivity pattern taken as reference.

"In labour man reveals his body needs; in work, his capacity and artisanal creativity; in action, himself. Action is the source of human life's meaning. It is the aptitude to begin something new that allows the individual to reveal his identity."

Parekh Bikhu¹

Conceived within the neurosis clinical context, psychoanalysis was gradually inquired by psychosis, perversion, autism's clinics. Today issues come from addiction, depression, melancholia and panic's clinics... From all these people who actually draw a new psychological suffering frame, to whom time is the present and speedy video clips' one, the body became a reference for the ideal constructions. Interiority's sense has been dissipated, the self assigns physical appearance and spectacle to itself and the suffering is configured and expressed in a form of an existential emptiness, coming from

¹ Bikhu (Parekh), "Hannah Arendt's Critique of Marx" In. *Hannah Arendt: The recovery of the public world*, Melvyn A. Hill, cit., pp.69,70.

the absence of a sense for life. These people build a scenario, which has little or nothing to do with that one, where hysterics rehearsed their existential dramas.

In some psychoanalytical authors' point of view, these inquiries rendered favourable an extension to the theoretical and clinical psychoanalytic domain. Nevertheless, in other ones', not only psychosis, perversion and autism's clinics but also diverse modes and configurations of psychological suffering's clinics nowadays, further than to induce to an extension for the psychoanalysis conceptual domain, take up a challenge to redescribe based on these clinics which offer a much different context from the neurosis clinic. All this to be possible to amplify in the maximum human being's and his or her cultural relations' descriptions.

This communication is an essay to face this challenge trying to find, in psychoanalytical field, and elsewhere, cues that justify psychoanalysis in actuality and its use to describe and approach human suffering's diverse configurations and subjectivities within our cultural context. Because, if among us, psychoanalysts, it has been a growing concern, I ask myself if we may affirm that we build narratives, which allow "to positivate" new ways of existence. In my point of view, they are still described as deviations, as oppositions, as neurosis' contraries, subjectivity pattern taken as reference. In other terms, on building these narratives we are not free from neurosis glasses yet, whose lenses prevent from or turn difficult, not only to formulate, but also to recognize new ways of existence and human cohabitation, in course in our culture. The priority of the neurosis pattern in psychoanalytical thinking seems to nourish beliefs, which tend to define man and humanity based on essential attributes, which further than showing incompatible for a complex changeable reality, do not turn easy the task of taking care of our world and its inhabitants.

Walter Carvalho and João Jardim's film, *Janela da Alma*, an excellent documentary about human sight, may be taken as a metaphor about how human experiences can have surprisingly and unpredictable significations. In this film, directors, writers, fine artists, musicians, all with different degrees of sight's compromise, give their report about what is to see. It is marvellous and

instigating to listen to Hermeto Pascoal speaking about the advantages related to his strabismus to seduce women in his youth, the benefits brought by his way of seeing different figures at the same time, the gain it represents to his music his out of focus eyesight. A Minas Gerais' blind city councilman's daughter's attest said it represented during her childhood a great advantage in respect to her colleagues, the fact of having a blind father. Many times he went to her school, to know her partners, who were curious to know how he lived, how his world was. These reports are good examples of how attributes and traits can be defined as desirable or not, good or bad, advantageous or not, depending on the way they are seen and narrated.

Moved by the concern on amplifying to the maximum the actual human description's possibilities, I have tried to find formulations, in psychoanalytical field, or in the case we want to keep the documentary's metaphor, lenses, which allow this wide vision.

Thus, I propose to think that in psychoanalytical field nowadays discourses live together which allow more variegate and diverse ways of subjectivity and human cohabitation vision and the ones which turn difficult to apprehend and "to positivate" some ways constructed out of neurosis' reference, in which repression has the structuralizing axis function. Parodying Rorty, I would say that the first discourses offer bigger possibilities to extend the pronoun we reference as far as possible, moved the way they are by the wish of solidarity. The second ones are moved by the wish of objectivity and, therefore, need from a metaphysics or an epistemology to restrain this reference's use.

In this sense, although risking a certain schema, I propose a psychoanalytical field's draft, establishing a water divisor among these discourses, taking as reference the statute which they give to repression in psychological and social ties constructions and the way they describe the relations self/other, man/culture. As we know, it was articulating these two aspects that Freud built his psychic and cultural metapsychology.

Beginning with the way how these discourses establish the relation self/other, man/culture. The one hand describes this relation in antagonist terms, in other words, the impossible surviving situation in life's beginning, the dependency situation, which it imposes, is interpreted in subordination/insubordination, domination/submission, and liberty/servitude's

language game. In this viewpoint, it is left to the self to recognize its abandonment's condition and to develop strategies to figure it out. On these strategies' feature depends its position towards the other: more or less submission, freedom, autonomy, etc. In this perspective, not only the slave and lord pattern but also the helplessness notion get an ontological feature, constituting a matrix to think the subjectivity's construction.

This vision is a direct critical heritage made by psychoanalysis against the cartesian rationalist individual, self's owner, entirely conscientious and convicted of his or her best proposals. Against this omnipotent rationalist individual, Freud opposes the helplessness-dislodged individual created by the invention of the unconscious and dislocated from the omnipotent place, which the rational primacy conferred during modernity. In the omnipotent self's place arises the impotent self as a reverse, as a narcissistic farce's deflated version of the omnipotent self². In this psychoanalytical vision, Klein and Lacan's thoughts would be inserted.

Ferenczi Balint and Winnicott seem to build a vision in which the self and the other are not necessarily seen as being antagonists. If in any human existence's way it is not possible to think of one without the other, or, as Paula Rocha likes to say, we are never alone, always there is one else, the maximum that we can affirm is that they take part of the same contingent game. In this way, life's beginning dependency ties are not interpreted by the domination's via, the questions 'who orders' or 'who dominates who' are not posed. In this sense it is not appropriated to apprehend independency and freedom as a possibility to subordinate the other or to put "it" away to prove if we are up to prescind. Far from describing the other as someone who dominates, controls, enslaves or subjugates, he or she is here thought as someone, who incites and impels the individual to be another one, to create and recreate for himself/herself forms of permanent relations within the world. The other, in these theories, at first, is who makes possible a creative relation with the world, which allows the one who begins life to develop the psychological capacity of

² Costa (J.F.), "O mito psicanalítico do desamparo" In. *Ágora – Estudos em teoria psicanalítica*, Vol. III, Número I, p.34, 2000. (Programa de Pós- graduação em teoria psicanalítica do Instituto de psicologia da UFRJ – Post-graduation program on psychoanalytical theory of Rio de Janeiro Federal University's Psychology Institute).

giving a sense for his or her universe's experiences, in a diverse and particular way.

In this model, there is no preestablished matrix. What really counts in this approach is that the individual may be more or less creative within his or her relations towards culture. Understanding here creativity as the ability to construct solutions, own and particular meanings for existence and act in culture, contributing to human experiences' enrichment and expansion, introducing the new and interrupting established and habitual ways of thinking and producing. Relations having more or less dependency or independency features are contingencies, human relations' possibilities among uncountable ones.

In this viewpoint, to prescind the other, control "it" or neutralize "it" would be unthinkable, since it is not possible to conceive human act without the self's idea as a relation. The self would not have a proper, permanent and unchangeable identity in there. The self is defined, in this viewpoint, as something, which describes and redescribes itself in a permanent way, during all its existence, and may only obtain substantiality within the relations' context, which he or she establishes with the other and with the culture. The other there is nothing else than a component of the same place's contingencies, which define, always provisionally, the existence, not attributing to him or her, therefore, any totalitarian or absolute dimension.

However, in our culture, it is difficult to think human actions out of the asymmetrical hierarchical relations' sphere, in which slave and lord pattern is taken as a metaphor for the social ties' constitutive matrix. Also in psychoanalytical field, when the antagonist essential and ontological position between the other and the self is assumed as a departure point, it turns difficult "to positivate" human act which occurs within relations of reciprocity and not within relations of domination, subordination and slavery'. Thinking that the other assumes lord or partner's features, persecutor or associate's, are mere possibilities of human relations, maybe it allows us to amplify the repertory we dispose to redescribe them.

It presupposes a certain disposition to question, in cultural domain as well as in psychoanalytical field, an authority pattern which, because of having sustained occidental civilization for uninterrupted centuries, ended suffering a

kind of naturalization. Or, said in other terms, ended being interpreted as inherent to human nature, to a certain natural order and, therefore, to an unchangeable humanity to organize and live together. This pattern, characterized by a hierarchical relation, supported by hierarchy and obedience, firmly anchored the occidental civilization. The metaphors lord/slave, father/son, shepherd/herd which serve to describe it, moulded sensibilities and patriarchal societies' thinking and producing ways until the beginning of the last century, when it entered into crisis and reached the apogee of its decline during the sixties and the seventies.

As Hanna Arendt says³, with the authority's loss – the element which stayed more stable in the process which during modernity wrecked tradition and religion – we lost the last thread which guided us with security during the last centuries. Maybe these loss' significations and dimension have impelled us to the equivoque of treating authority's crisis in a generalized way, taking a particular authority way as universal, as “The Authority” and furthermore, according to this pattern the statute inherent to the condition men constitute and establish social ties.

Hanna Arendt comes to show us the equivoque of this cue, to punctuate this concept's contingency, reminding us that the authority, as it was conceived in Occidentalism – as a unique factor, if not decisive in human communities – has not always existed. Despite of being sustained by a long tradition, it is not universal and it is not present in all organizational forms of man's cohabitation in human history. She takes the greek Polis political organizational pattern as a human experience, which questions this constitutive and ontological dimension of the authority pattern for men's living together. Making the authority's concept a historical approach, Arendt shows that it was not known and identified not even in greek language nor in greek political experiences, until it be introduced by Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies which founded it on domestic subjects and family life's administrative experiences. It was in these ambits, in the private and domestic ones, that the family father assumed the lord's position, having an unquestionable power over the family members and slaves. The introduction of

³ Arendt (Hanna), “Que é a autoridade?” In. *Entre o passado e o futuro*. São Paulo, Editora Perspectiva, 1968.

this authority pattern in greek Polis' private and public lives represented, for Anna Arendt, an insurmountable contradiction, since the political life which characterized it presupposed reciprocal relations among free men, what is incompatible with the ideas of hierarchy and obedience which supported the authority's relations.

It was, however, this authority model which gained power in occidental thinking, engendering, in modernity, control and subjectivity production's strategies, which Foucault called disciplines. Freud's thinking insertion and some psychoanalysts' who succeeded him in this tradition, which allowed them to attribute to repression, to interdiction and to law the statute of fundamentals, the psychic and cultural constitutive conditions, according to them a certain essentialist and transcendent feature.

The decline of this authority model which guided Occidentalism and marked, in this way freudian thinking, obliges us, therefore, before trying to reissue it no matter how it costs, to think alternatives against traditional forms of conceiving the psychic constitution and man's relations within culture.

This point, as I suggested, represents the other side through which we can establish a water divisor among discourses, which compose the actual psychoanalytical field. Because, if for some psychoanalysts, psychic formations always bring the interdiction brand; for others, they do not embrace human experiences' totality. The way they think, in psychic formations' ensemble there is infinity of arrangements, experiences' ways which, in total, bring the interdiction brand or any other element which can be used as an invariant. In this way of thinking, the interdiction loses any fundament, essence or transcendence's feature. The repression stops being paradigmatic for subjectivity.

The idea of repression as paradigmatic of psychic constitution and men's relations in culture presents a fine relation with the self/other conceiving way. When the reference is the ontological antagonism between the self and the other and the metaphor used to describe them is the lord and slave's one, the other being, by definition, a threat, the interdiction and the repression are a condition for subjectivity. It was this pattern, which, in its origin, made Freud formulate psychic as the resulting from the action of repression over the power of the destructive instinct. Nevertheless, if the other is recognized in his

difference and taken as a collaborator or a creative life, as Winnicott understands, the need of interdiction and repression is relativized and loses its ontological feature. Then, describing possibilities amplify in subjectivity's ways as well as in human cohabitation's ways, without the question of being narrated as a reference to any taken model, what always confers them a deviated or a perverted feature.

Models which allow to think that individuals in very different situations as a mother and his baby, although being in such asymmetrical positions in respect to the surviving conditions, do not necessarily reproduce a submission and alienation's situation contained in the lord and the slave's metaphor. However, they can be participants in a creative life's construction for both of them, they open possibilities to put into focus relations of reciprocity, indispensable to the exercise of freedom, autonomy, creativity. United in a semantic domain built by words like alienation, subordination and servitude, it constructs another one with words like cooperation, co-responsibility, reciprocity and solidarity.

We could say then, in parallel to the wish of the individual, one of the freudian individual's versions⁴ (the readings about the helplessness offer other possibilities to understand the freudian individual) built by the psychic perspective described as the result of the repression's act over the destructive and enslaving instinct, that Winnicott proposes the individual of the creative and transforming action. This one is constituted as a result of his or her makes in the world, in a partner's relation, in reciprocity and interdependency's, once the creative action only occurs with the other's presence and its participation.

In this point of view, instinct is not, by definition, destructive and does not represent an excessive force to be contained, but an impetus to be conducted to a creative activity. Jurandir Freire Costa proposes us a beautiful metaphor to mark the differences between these two positions. "For each one its Holland", he says. "Freud's favourite metaphor is the Holland's dike one, edified to

⁴ I thank Rosa Pereira the cue about this subject during my communication in the IX Psychoanalytical Colloquy in CPPL, may 2002.

contain the advance of the sea and the imminent inundation; Winnicott's is the water or wind's mill, which profits nature power to make useful works."⁵

If in the first hypothesis, interdiction and renouncement represent pads into culture, in the second one, action, creation and transformation mark since always man's relation with culture.

In other terms, while in the first hypothesis, culture is seen as exterior to the self, and its contact is always traumatic; in the second one, culture is the privileged place for the construction of a subjective experience and expression. In this sense, it is the place where the individual develops the meaning of existence's continuity, acting and creating, building with the environment an intermediate space liable to sustain his or her creative capacity. However, the contact with culture is only traumatic when the environment impedes the creative flow of the individual.

About this point, we may establish a fine relation among Winnicott's and Hanna Arendt's thoughts. As Winnicott, Arendt confers to human action – in her political theory, the political action – the condition itself for distinction and singularization. In her vision, it is through action and word that we include ourselves in culture and it is acting that we inaugurate something new, interrupt habitual and automatic processes, and enrich the world with an unpredictable make of our singularity. It is acting in plurality, making rise the new and the unpredictable that we practice freedom. As action, word and freedom are not given things, it is necessary for building and maintaining a public space where political action becomes possible, always when individuals unite themselves through discourse and action, in interdependency and reciprocity's relations.

Thus, if in her political theory, Arendt confers to action the creation and transformation's power and locates the public space as the place where it is rehearsed, Winnicott, in his theory of creativity, proposes the notion of a transitional space as the scenario of the creative action's sustentation.

The transitional space, defined by Winnicott as a third area of human experience, "is an area which is not disputed, because no requirement is made on its name, except the fact it exists as a resting place for the individual

⁵ Costa (F. Jurandir), "Playdoier pelos irmãos" In: Kehl (Maria Rita), *Função fraterna*, São Paulo, Relume Dumará, 2001.

obstinate in his permanent human task of maintaining internal and external realities separated, even though interrelated.”⁶ It is the result of a tacit agreement among those who construct it, on suspending the fossil created by antinomies between the interior and the exterior, fantasy and reality, mind and body, conscious and unconscious. Using Winnicott’s words, what it is possible to say about this space is that “there exists an agreement among us and the baby, never asking the question: ‘Did you conceive it or has it been presented to you from the exterior?’”. The important is that no decision shall be expected about the subject. The question shall not even been formulated.”⁷

It is, however, in this area of experience, where nothing is defined by itself, where it is possible to live with the to be or not to be paradoxes, where the tension between the satisfaction of the instinct and the actual morality is not posed, where subjectivity and objectivity do not generate impasses among themselves, that the creative impetus can follow its flow without problems. The self and the other can continuously create and recreate, diverse ways of satisfaction; write and redescribe multiple meanings for their existences, amplify even the limits of the unlimited, the repertory of human existence’s ways.

For Winnicott as for Freud, this intermediate area of experience is conserved along life on playing and in art. But, if for Freud, these activities are ways, among other ones used by man to deal with the threatening excesses of life’s instinct, for Winnicott, they are not an end itself.⁸ “It is playing”, he says, “that the child or the adult enjoy their freedom for creation”.⁹ And, only being creative, the individual can feel himself and develop a proper sense for existing and the existence’s continuity. In this sense, far from representing a well succeeded way of renouncement for the satisfaction of the instinct, dealing with the ontological incompatibility between fantasy and reality, playing is the form itself the individual acts, creating objects and always new ways of satisfaction.

It was certainly this way of thinking that made Winnicott define psychotherapy as a superposition of two ludicrous areas, the patient and the therapist’s. “If the therapist can not play”, he says, “so he does not suit the work.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Idem.

⁸ Winnicott (D.W.), *O brincar e a realidade e a realidade*. (1971), Rio de Janeiro, Imago editora, 1975. p. 79.

⁹ Idem, p. 80

If it is the patient who can not, then something needs to be done to help him or her to become able to play, after what psychotherapy can begin. Playing is essential because on this the patient manifests his or her creativity.”¹⁰

From my point of view, there is the most significant contribution of this way of thinking, to a reflection about our psychoanalytical clinic in actuality and its deadlocks. Because, if the hysterics at Freud’s time made him describe his symptoms as resulting from sexuality’s repression, in the dilemmas’s context created by thought and modern bourgeois moral in the end of the nineteenth century, the configurations of the psychic suffering in contemporaneity point in another direction: the absence of a sense for life, which not being given anymore, has to be permanently constructed.

Thinking the clinic as something analogous to acting in the world among partners, however, as a space of creativity and exercise of freedom, in Winnicott and Arendt’s senses, seems to me an instigating and profitable idea.

Firstly, in this undetermined and radical field and in the refusal of any essentialist or ontological reference, maybe we are able “to positivate” certain ways of subjectivity, which do not accomplish, not even minimally, determined neurosis metapsychological pre-requisites.

Secondly, it attributes to creativity and to freedom a relevant place, which permits to formulate new cohabitation’s forms among men, as fraternity, as friendship, as cordiality, as solidarity, as hospitality and as respect.

Thirdly, it gives back to psychoanalysis the condition for an empiric practice, which was undermined by scientific exigencies and excessive formalizations. Thinking that the creative action is not reduced to extraordinary makes, but may happen in the simplest everyday experiences, protect us from idealizations and prescriptions, which nourish submission.