

A hypothesis for a third topic regarding intersubjectivity and the subject in a common, shared psychic space

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Abstract

The question of a third topic was one of the main themes debated in the recent Congress of Psychoanalysts of the francophone countries. The principal debate centred on the relationships between the configuration of the internal world of a subject and the relationships dealing with its “first others”, namely the parents and the family. I would like to underline that this theoretical point of view is focused on the practice of individual therapy. When the psychoanalytical method extends to multi-subjective situations, like the group, the family, the couple, and the institutions, for example, the psychic space that develops has a specific reality that is common and shared by all the subjects. In 1976, when I first got interested in group psychic apparatus I began to construct a third topic based on the articulation between the common and shared psychic reality, the internal world of the single subject and the space of the link among the subjects. This third topic became necessary to illustrate the way in which the subject is formed in intersubjectivity as a subject of the unconscious, and what role the subject plays in the formation of the common and shared psychic reality.

Key-words: third topic, intersubjectivity, unconscious, common psychic space, individual

The debate in the 66th Congress of Psychoanalysts of the francophone countries was on the question of the third topic. What emerged was the need for introducing another intelligible model of the organisation and functioning of the psyche, in the limits and according to the point of view of the internal psychic space and its relationship with the external world, often defined as the field of intersubjectivity. The title of the Congress “Object Relations and Models of Drive” determined the orientation and the conceptual framework to the debate.

It seems that the conceptualisation of intersubjectivity has caused problems and often much confusion, especially when it is superimposed on the issue of object relations. I have a different opinion on the opportuneness and the consistency of a third topic: the difference lies in the distinction we must make between a third topic centred on object relations, and a third topic based on the psychic reality of the configurations of intersubjective links associated to the position of the subject in intersubjectivity.

1. The current debate on the third topic concerns the intrapsychic space

Before entering in to the heat of the discussion, I would like to draw attention to two observations: the first is linguistic and secondly, its epistemological importance is not to be underestimated.

We are talking about topic in a hyperbolic way. In the Freudian tradition, topic is only a point of view of the metapsychological conception of the psychic apparatus, and this point of view co-exists and is articulated with other points of view: dynamic, economic and successively genetic. The “topic” therefore, is a metonymy for the entire metapsychology and deciding on this view for presenting the entire metapsychology indicates that the question is centrally located within the area of psychic reality, its agencies and its essential formation that qualify the unconscious as an agency and as a quality.

The debate on the third topic, just as the debate that was had over the second topic, reveals a change in the conception of the metapsychology of the psychic apparatus, and on a deeper plane implies a critical perspective of psychoanalytical epistemology. I intend epistemology in a very simple way: in what way do we know and elaborate the object we are studying into theory, in other words, into a series of formulations that make the object intelligible and communicable? The merit of this definition lies in the fact it comprehends the practical and methodological procedures from which we gain our knowledge.

If it is clear that psychoanalytical epistemology confers on the unconscious its theoretical object field, its processes and its formations and its subjective effects, it is also clear that the method by which it is able to perceive its object and to deal with the object’s “normal” or “pathological” effects, defines and puts limits to that field. In general, such effects relate to the conflictual relations that the unconscious nurtures with its own components and the subsets that derive from them, but also with the external reality.

The point that I want to underline, however, is that the theory of the psychic apparatus, (metapsychology is an emanation of it) is an elaboration closely depending on the paradigmatic and *princeps* method of psychoanalysis, the part that concerns the so-called individual therapy.

Clinical and epistemological determinations of metapsychological revisions

What determines the first topic is the need to develop a *corpus* of critical knowledge on the Unconscious, the discovery and knowledge of which are made possible through therapy. The first topic accounts for the pre-eminent position of the Unconscious in as much as it is an agency located internally in the “psychic apparatus”. This presentation of the “psychic apparatus” was conceived by Freud to account for linking and transformation work that is carried out in the “apparatus”,

work that establishes its constancy, ensures its defence, manages its energy and its cathexis, satisfies the wishes that develop there, and regulates relations with the external reality.

The second topic came about because of the change of the economic conception in the psychic apparatus. The definitions of these conceptual changes are numerous and well-known, some emerge from Freud's life, and others to mutations that his clinical practice underwent due to external causes, (namely the War and other non-psychical traumatic effects). The introduction of the concept of the death instinct modifies the conception of the psychic apparatus, also the conception of the "topic" and all the agencies of the psychic apparatus undergo a change.

This theoretical change of the concept of the death instinct does not imply a change in the basic method of the psychoanalysis, but we observe that Freud let himself be convinced that extending the field of psychoanalytic practice is possible, even auspicious (1918), and that therapy is only one of the many "applications" of psychoanalysis (1926). Moreover, in the same period and in the same circumstances that determined the demand for a second topic, and the formulation of his "economic" change, Freud begins to work on "group psychology" and "analysis of the Ego" (1920-21).

Here I would like to touch on two issues:

a) Freud resuming the re-elaboration of the theme of Totem and Taboo, paves the way to what he calls his "social psychology". His meaning differs from the meaning his contemporaries gave to the notion of social psychology. Freudian social psychology is a psychoanalytical conception of the psychic apparatus from the point of view of the functions that involve the Other (*der Andere*, cfr. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud, 1921) and organised and spontaneous sets, like groups, crowds and institutions. The most important concept that describes the processes and the effects of social psychology is identification. In the above-mentioned work, Freud advances the idea of a group psyche (*Gruppenpsyche*), a mass mind (*Massenseele*), bringing forth the revolutionary idea that the field of theoretical objects of psychoanalysis with "*Seele*" and "*Psyche*", can go beyond the individual psychic apparatus.

b) The turning point in the second 'topic' is considered to be the introduction of the death instinct which brings about a major change. However, other dimensions associated with the death instinct (that today we would call intersubjectivity) and extension of the psychoanalytical practice towards other methods to substantiate the validity of "social psychology" in 1920, are not taken into consideration. Already in 1912-13, Freud is thinking in a collective dimension when he formulates salient hypotheses in Totem and Taboo regarding the relationship between the birth of society and the overcoming of the reiteration of murder by the symbolic contract between the Brothers and with the Father. This contract represents the fundamental nucleus of the process of *subjectivation*.

Apart from this elucidation, I see the discussion on the third topic and how it is configured today a partial resumption of the discussion that was had on the "second"

topic. But with a restriction: the “other” is in the position of an internal object, or better, in the position of deciding whether or not to answer to the subject’s request of need or wishes. This is the foundation of the restrictive definition of intersubjectivity. Its restriction lies in the fact that it does not relate to a common and shared space, but to the other (or others); on the other hand, if seen from the point of view of understanding the function of the other (the object of the object relation), and its role in the structuration and functioning of the psychic apparatus of the subject, it is not lacking in interest. The “second” topic was made necessary by the onset on clinical practice of present-day traumatism and the perception of a repetition economy that was at work in the structural pathologies.

Also the “third” topic, has its origins in clinical practice and the perception of changes coming about in: a) borderline cases, b) the lack of symbolisation processes and c) the structural deficit in narcissism. The “third” topic, as mentioned above, regards the area where processes are activated in the work of individual therapy, and, on concluding takes into consideration the transformations that are produced in the subjective space of the subject relevant to its singularity.

For all that, if we observe a little closer, we cannot help noticing that knowledge originating from other sources with respect to classical therapy creates effects within the “third” topic. I am thinking of psychotherapy with a psychoanalytical approach that treats mother-father-child, couples, or those therapies that have developed on the fringes of psychoanalytical theory and psychoanalytical institutions, that can be extended regardless of their origins to treat single subjects in psychoanalytical groups in response to forms of suffering that are “otherwise inaccessible”. It is evident that the formations and processes of psychic reality of these sets cannot be taken into consideration save changing the method that must always be mindful of the principles of the psychoanalytical method.

2. A third “topic” regarding the configurations of intersubjective links and the subject of the link

I have just explained that a change in the field of clinical practice and theoretical elements of psychoanalysis is in need of a metapsychological reorganisation. From the moment different psychoanalysts started to develop psychoanalytical practice with more than one subject, e.g. groups, families and couples, they were triggering off the need (without wholly accepting it) to think of the unconscious psychoanalytical processes and formations that are revealed, in terms of a set and not only of single subjects that participate. From this point of view, the Bionian concepts of basic assumptions and group culture imply a new topic for the unconscious. Also the Freudian notion of group psyche (if it had been actuated in an *ad hoc* method) would have made a new topic for the unconscious indispensable.

Having worked as a psychoanalyst with the “divan” and with groups, for some years now I have becoming more and more interested in the third topic. My aim is to

construct an intelligible model in psychoanalysis that accounts for the connection between three psychic spaces: the intrapsychic space of the subject, the space of the links that connect up two or more subjects and the specific group space.

If I still say this “third” topic is in a constructive stage after more than forty years, the reason is, that on one hand the concept of the third topic is founded on therapy and on the other it includes the extending of the field of psychoanalysis towards a common and shared psychic reality, so as you can see continuity between these two concepts is not simple and straightforward (1).

Consequently, for various reasons, my conception of intersubjectivity and its effects on the single subject has created very different ideas compared to those prevalent in psychoanalytical debate.

The first implication: the group psychic apparatus model

When I first started working on the third topic at the end of the 1960's, I immediately felt the necessity to conceive a group reality, starting from the structural and functional model that I call group psychic apparatus.

Choosing this term I wanted to make clear that every multi-subjective set could be seen as a psychic apparatus in the same sense that Freud uses this term. This apparatus works to link and ‘tune’ more or less conflictually certain processes and certain psychic formations of its members; these formations are transformed by their own links and they become relatively autonomous with respect to their matrix. Successively, they will form an unconscious psychic reality that will form the base for a common psychic space that will be shared by the members of this set. Working with groups I called this psychic “device” that makes this apparatus come about, psychic group apparatus. The extension of this model to other configurations with links (couples, families, institutions) confirms the notion of a psychic apparatus of links. The psychic apparatus of links determines an anaclitic situation in a multiple and reciprocal way on the differentiated and undifferentiated groupal formations of the psychism of each member. In this way we can see that the psychic apparatus of links (of the couple) is not reducible to the individual psychic apparatus nor is it extrapolated from it.

The corollary of this formulation is, that every configuration of links is a referable psychic structure necessary for its preservation and functionality. In these areas objects, imago, agencies and signifiers are represented and their functions and purposes are imposed by the organisation of links that some subjects embody. In groups, for example, we find the functions of the common Ideal, of the figures of the Ancestor, of the Infant King, of Death, of the Hero, of the primal group, of the leader, of the mediators, of the scapegoat, of the *porteparole*, *porte-symptôme*, *porte-rêve*, etc. (2).

On creating these areas each configuration of links imposes on the subjects a certain number of psychic constriction regarding renunciation, abandonment or effacements of a part of the psychic reality that singularizes and differentiates them. Renunciation

of realisation of instinctual aims, giving up personal ideals for the benefit of the common and shared ideal, effacement of the ego boundaries and effacement of the singularity of thought are some of these restrictions. The link imposes a series of restrictions distributed in different ways and prescribes a way of proceeding: restriction of instinctual aims, restriction of beliefs, ideas, perceptive rules, adhesion to common sentiments and ideals. The link curbs the repression and encourages cooperation in the set, establishes the rules that regulate the contracts, the pacts and the unconscious, preconscious and conscious alliances. In exchange the link, in that it is an element that includes the subjects, assumes a certain number of tasks for the benefit of its subjects, (tasks to which the subjects collaborate), for instance the creation of collective defence mechanisms or participation to the functions of the Ideal. This is not the place to describe the different modalities of links or the harmony between the psyches or to specify the unconscious psychic organisers of the apparatus and their participation to the functions of the internal groups. I only want to stress that this model implies a metapsychological conception on two levels: a) the psychic reality of the group, b) the psychic reality of the subject in as much as it is articulated totally with the psychic reality of the other participants. On conclusion, it is these internal groups that necessitate a third topic.

The second implication: the concept of unconscious alliances

A second implication came about with the introduction of my concept of unconscious alliances (Kaës, 1989, 1993, 2007). The unconscious alliances are created through psychic work on behalf of subjects belonging to an intersubjective set that creates links among themselves. It could be said that the alliance is an effect of the link and that the link precedes the alliance. In this way the alliance consolidates the link, and it ensures it as long as the subjects are united reciprocally in the terms of the alliance. The main characteristic of alliances that interests me concerns their unconscious quality, however the field of my research doesn't regard only the unconscious quality of alliances. What I strive to understand in general, is the relationship they have with the unconscious, here seen in the light as a system or topic agency of the psychic apparatus. I also strive to understand the role the alliances play in the process of formation of the unconscious, not least the role they play in the manifestations of its effects.

I gave the name unconscious alliances to different common and shared psychic formations. These formations connect with a combination of unconscious relationships that subjects of a link have between themselves and with the set of which they are the founding part and nucleus. One of their general characteristics is, through common action, to achieve common interests and to achieve precise aims, that otherwise would be impossible for single subjects to achieve.

The purpose of the unconscious alliances is, a) to ensure vital cathexis in order to preserve the links and the existence of its components. In order to achieve this, the unconscious alliances demand reciprocity and commonality of the narcissistic

cathexis and the object cathexis; b) to create a reciprocity and commonality of defence mechanisms to deal with the negative aspects of the individual and collective psychic life.

These goals may be shared or considered differently by each one of the partners of the alliance. The alliances imply in fact, a resonance of the phantasies and the identifications, and are in need of mutuality of the cathexis that links the subjects to each other, in the alliance. In order to create and maintain the unconscious alliances, psychic work is needed and must be produced by the subjects. Commitment and mutual anaclisis are obligatory and in some cases forced onto the partners in order to achieve an alliance.

In groups and in families, in couples and in institutions, the unconscious alliances are established according to a sort of sealed pact of the subjects' unconscious. The psychic reality in links is modelled in part on such alliances and in part on the psychic reality of the subjects of the link (3).

The third implication: the problematics of intersubjectivity

A psychoanalytical approach of the group and of the subject in the group brings a substantial contribution to the problematic of intersubjectivity. Today the question of intersubjectivity interests many psychoanalysts, but often contrasts with their cultural tradition or theoretical referents. Generally, intersubjectivity is not considered to be a specific space, but rather is a dimension of the intrapsychic organisation. And this is the case of the debate on the third topic. From my point of view a different psychoanalytical conception of intersubjectivity implies another third topic. I would like to call to mind that the concept of intersubjectivity was first created on the basis of philosophical problematics, of psychology of consciousness and how the subject refers to the recognition of the other. The sources that gave rise to these problematics can be found in phenomenology, linguistics of the 'enunciated', interaction psychology, and ethnology. These modern approaches have important antecedents in Hegel's dialectic philosophy, Husserl's phenomenology, and philosophies of recognition and reciprocity, especially Buber and Levinas. The intuition of an internal difference of a gap between the self and the self of the internal subject is a late acquisition, for the specie and for individuals. The concept of alterity that deals with the vicissitudes of internal alterity comprehends a much less operational intersubjectivity with respect to the North American interactionism that refers essentially to the behaviourist entwinement, or according to Stolorow and Atwood, to contextualism.

In the field of post-Freudian psychoanalysis many theories of intersubjectivity co-exist. In the wake of post-Hegelianism, Lacan was one of the first to introduce the notion that privileged its alienating effects on a subject essentially subjugated to the wishes of the other, who is nothing but an inadequate representative of the great Other. Lacan says the psychic reality's goal (that is produced in and by the intersubjective link), is to keep the imaginary consistency alive. His criticism of the

group is the consequence.

I am utilising the meaning and the context of this notion as it is intended in Europe. I don't intend by intersubjectivity a regime of behavioural interactions between individuals who communicate their feelings for empathetic reasons. But rather the experience and the space that stems from the psychic reality determined by the relationship between subjects, in as much as they are subjects of the unconscious. I include this issue among the problematics of psychoanalysis, but not in accordance with Lacan who is centred solely on the subject, and not on the specific set created by the conjunctions of subjectivity.

Intersubjectivity is not superimposed on the position or the function of the other in (or for) the psyche of a subject. Intersubjectivity is the way in which subjects are linked together by their reciprocal subjection (in a structureless or alienating way) to the constitutive mechanisms of the unconscious: the repression or disavowal in common, shared phantasies or signifiers, unconscious wishes and fundamental prohibition that have the power to organise them.

In order to take into consideration the set of processes and formations of intersubjectivity, a different logic of the psychic processes is necessary. In addition to a logic of internal processes and formations, I believe there is need of a logic of *correlations of subjectivity*, a logic of the conjunctions and disjunctions, the formulation of which could be in the following statement: "Not one without the other and without the set which creates and contains them; one without the other, but in the the set that reunites them". This statement means that we can only exist in intersubjectivity. In other words, the subject is manifest but doesn't exist, save in a relationship with the other, and I would add, the "others". It also means the way of "becoming the Ego" in Freud's *Ich werden*, the interruptions and discontents of this "becoming" is embedded in the intersubjective relationship with the other: and so this is true for the child, for the man or woman, and for the father or mother.

Intersubjectivity is not the only essential component of the subject kept in the subjectivity of the other, or others. Rather, it can be found in its own psychic space from any configuration of links. Consequently, the question of intersubjectivity consists in the recognition and articulation of different psychic spaces, partially heterogeneous, and each having its own logic.

Contemplated internally in this register, the problematics of intersubjectivity give us access to psychic suffering, and to present day psychopathological forms that cannot be understood, analysed or assisted if not by way of the articulation with the values and the functions that they have assumed or continue to assume for the other, or for multiples of others, and lastly for the group, the subject of which is both constitutive and constituent.

My standpoint on this issue necessitates other affirmations. For instance, the problematics of intersubjectivity trigger off an important question in psychoanalysis. It concerns the intersubjective conditions of the formation of the unconscious and the subject of the unconscious. In this sense, I believe the dynamic structure of the psychic space between two or more subjects is intersubjectivity. This space includes

processes, formations and specific experiences, the effects of which change the events of the subjects and of the unconscious and their becoming the Ego within Us. According to this definition we have come a long way from the concept that considers intersubjectivity a mere interactive phenomenon.

Our conception of intersubjectivity demands certain psychic work. The notion of “demand for psychic work” is first mentioned by Freud when he envisages the question of instinct from the point of view of psychic life. He writes that instinct appears to us as a concept between the psychic and the somatic, like a psychic representation of excitations that emanates from the internal body and reaches the mind in the same measure as the need of work imposed on the psychic because of its correlation with the corporeal. I often mention this notion to illustrate how certain psychic work is made necessary when there is a link up with the “other”, because the psyches or part of them associate with each other and merge, in order to explore their differences and regulate their tensions.

There are four distinct and important demands for psychic work that are made necessary by intersubjective links or conjunctions of subjectivity:

a) The first demand: the subject is under obligation to invest its link and others with its object narcissistic libido in order to receive the necessary cathexis that endows it as a member-subject of the link. This demand of work is modelled on the narcissistic contract described by P. Castoriadis-Aulagnier (1975) (4).

b) The second demand: certain psychic formations of the subject are put in latency, renounced or abandoned. In 1921 Freud wrote that the Ego must let go part of its identifications and personal ideals to the advantage of common ideals and in exchange will receive benefits from the group and/or from the leader. Every link imposes on the subject limitations of beliefs, representation, perceptive rules, adhesion to ideals and common sentiments. Intersubjectivity implies that certain psychic functions are inhibited or reduced, whilst others are electively convoked and amplified. We must also acknowledge that self-alienation processes are put to the service of group demands.

c) The third demand: in order to form conjunctions of subjectivity and preserve the links, processes of repression, disavowal and rejection has to be activated. These processes do not only concern the meta-defensive anaclisis that members of a group can find within the group, as E. Jacques has demonstrated. They regard every configuration of a link that ensures and mobilises the meta-defensive mechanisms that are necessary for its self-preservation and the realisation of its aims. Therefore they are demanded on behalf of the link and members’ personal interests.

These are the status and the function of the defensive, unconscious alliances. As we will see, these alliances produce the processes in the unconscious of the link, thus creating its neurotic and psychotic knots, and for these reasons they are the most important elements of the formation of a specific psychic reality of a configuration of a link.

d) The fourth demand is articulated around the fundamental prohibitions relating to the work of civilisation (*kulturarbeit*) and symbolisation processes. Freud insisted on

the necessity of the mutual renunciation of direct realisation of instinctual aims so that a “community of law” can be established thus guaranteeing safe and stable links. The result of this demand is in the unconscious alliances that have a structure, in which we include the narcissistic contract, the pact between the brothers and with the father and the contract of mutual renunciation. The result of this demand of work is not only the formation of sense, the activity of symbolisation and interpretation but also the capacity to love, play, think and work.

These four demands converge on the creation of a common and shared psychic space. If seen from the point of view of the subject, these demands are at the same time create a structure and conflictuality. The main conflictuality lies in the necessity to perceive oneself individually, and the necessity to be a subject in the group, and for the group. The psychic work of the members of a group is carried out conferring or receiving benefits and burdens. A sort of economic budget is established on what is earned and lost according to the above-mentioned demands.

In a certain way we cannot escape these demands: we must conform to them to create a link and exist as subjects. However, we must also learn to disengage and unlink ourselves every time the demands and the alliances that make them rigid are manipulated often unknowingly by our own self-alienation and the alienation we impose on the others. I believe we can define the clinical practice of psychoanalytical work in group situations according to this perspective.

3.Elements for a third topic in which the intersubjective space and the space of the subject are articulated

I have tried to demonstrate that the three formulations described above indicate a third topic, in other words a metapsychology of the unconscious that articulates the intersubjective space and the space of the subject. These propositions are: the model for a group psychic apparatus, the concept of unconscious alliances and the problematics of intersubjectivity. I defined the problematics of intersubjectivity as a conjunction of subjectivity, a sort of “producer” of the unconscious. I will now sum up some formulations that I wrote in *Linking, Alliances and Shared Space* (2007).

The proposed models and concepts and their metapsychological double belonging

The three above-mentioned models and concepts have a double metapsychological belonging. They are psychic double-faced configurations and doubly organised. They do not belong to a single subject, even though the subject is a recipient and an essential constituent of the set, nor do they belong to the set that could not exist without its subjects. On one hand we could describe their function as producing and linking unconscious material of intersubjective links and that they can be seen in the terms of a topic, of an intersubjective economy and dynamic. On the other hand we can describe them from the viewpoint of the intrapsychic organisation of every single

subject: the unconscious alliances are negotiated and kept unconscious for realising unconscious wishes of each subject: they are one of the ways of producing the repressed and unrepressed unconscious that each member of the link needs in order to be part of that link.

These two points relate dialogically: clinical practice warns us that any change in the alliance, for example, the agreements and pacts that are the basis of the shared and common psychic reality, undermines the unconscious psychic structure of every subject. In turn, any change in the structure, economy or dynamic, of the subject, (e.g. a therapy, a divorce, adolescent years), clashes with the forces that support the alliances established in the link, in which the subject is an established part.

The topics of the unconscious

A third topic is required if we are going to consider the heterogeneous, ectopic and “hetero-topic” features of the unconscious. Other psychic areas contain them and are responsible for the production and transformation.

The psychic spaces regarding links are in other areas of the unconscious, and we have already started familiarising with the processes and formations, the economy and the dynamic.

The unconscious alliances, the phoretic functions, the common and shared dreams all have a double topic: the alliances can be found where repressed relationships between single subjects and the set take place – in the conjunction of intersubjectivity. This plural topic makes us think that the unconscious is not entirely contained within the boundaries of the individual psychic space. The whole unconscious is found nor in the first, nor in the second topic of Freudian metapsychology. The psychic space regarding links and sets is in other areas of the unconscious. The concepts regarding the “ectopic” and “poli-topic” (5) could account for this metapsychology regarding the plural areas of the psyche. To sum up, we are looking at the conjunction of more than one topic. Every individual topic is related to other topics that we could call “extra-topics” (6), if the subjects are considered individually: the Unconscious of the subject gains access to its Preconscious through the Conscious of another subject. On the face of it we are dealing with *heterotopy*.

The composite dynamic of psychic conflicts

A new dynamic of the unconscious has still to be constructed. Alongside the intrapsychic conflict that has its origins in infantile psycho-sexuality there is an unconscious conflict between the subject and part of its psyche detained by the other or deposited in the other (or others). Freud in *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, he reveals a very fundamental question to us: the subject is divided between the demands to be “itself” and those demands that derive from its status and function of being a member of an intersubjective chain, where it is a combination of servant, a link in the “transmission”, heir and actor.

I have already described how the important defences of the unconscious operate in the defensive alliances: the defences operate through repression and through disavowal, rejection, exportation, disownment, appropriation, effacement. The same operations can be achieved by all the subjects of a link, or else sometimes subjects carry out repression while others disavowal. The analysis of the defensive unconscious alliances has showed us that they are meta-defences used by the repression and disavowal functions, in order to enable reinforcement of this repression and disavowal; in fact they reveal not only unconscious contents but the alliance itself: this remains unconscious with respect to the unconscious that is produced and kept by the alliance. Clinical practice shows us that when the “return of the repressed” comes about in certain subjects, the balance of the alliance is transformed revealing its unrepressed-disavowed knots.

The unconscious alliances are the result of compromises made among the subjects and preserved in the alliance. The alliances’ objective is to produce and preserve symptoms, according to the interests of each subject: the subjects use the alliance to achieve their objective.

The sole task of the unconscious alliances is to support the function of non-acknowledgement linked to the symptom. The production of shared symptoms has as its objective the subjugation of each subject to its symptom in accordance with the function that it carries out for the other, and the others, in the link, and for the link. In this way the symptom is doubly reinforced thus increasing the difficulty to unlink it.

These affirmations are confirmed by research on the unconscious alliances, on the co-repression and the disavowal in common, on the correlations between disavowal and repression of the negative pact, and on the renunciations inflicted by the collective situation.

Elements for a new transversal economy

The relevance of the economic viewpoint can be seen in the notion of psychic work. The analysis of the apparatus of the psyches shows us how a link activates instinctual energy in each member and it organises itself to face the conduction and transformation of the excitations, that if are allowed to accumulate, would become pathogenic. The apparatus of the link is a metapsychical organisation that manages and transforms the individual psyches, but it is also a structure that deals with the formation and the information.

An important aspect of the transversal psychic economy is the transference of the individual economy to the economy of the link, and vice versa.

Displacement of instinctual energy is produced in the group apparatus from one pole to another; also the cathexis is distributed on objects of the group that are more or less correlated. Research on the process of *diffraction* has demonstrated how the transference and transmission of cathexis on a set of components of a link takes place. This notion is useful for understanding in clinical practice lateral transference and counter-transference in the processes of individual therapy.

Conclusion

The “third” topic that I have endeavoured to describe the play and the basic formulations, is necessary only if the hypothesis of a shared psyche in intersubjectivity is fully accepted: we must construct models of comprehensibility of this reality that regard its consistency, its structures, and the rules that govern its transformation.

This third topic deals with a new conception of the subject -a new metapsychology of its psychic apparatus. In a part of the unconscious of the subject, there is an ectopic area, a *topos* that is inaccessible if the *princeps* method of psychoanalysis, (the individual therapy) is utilised. This topos is unthinkable with the categories of the metapsychology deriving from psychoanalysis.

The knowledge of the unconscious is not completed by the experience offered by psychoanalytical therapy. When psychoanalytical practice is modified and our knowledge of the psychic apparatus is transformed, then also the metapsychology will have to be revised.

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Notes

- 1) At the end of the 60's, I developed and formulated proposals that were published in different works (in 1976, and later in 1993 and 1999) and recently: *Linking, Alliances and Shared Space: Groups and the Psychoanalyst* (2007).
- 2) N.T. Meaning messenger of the word, the symptom and the dream.
- 3) I will only mention the principle of these alliances and their implications in a third topic. I will not describe the principal types or their structural, defensive, offensive and pathological functions (Kaës, 2007).
- 4) I have always preferred P. Castoriadis-Aulagnier's intersubjectivity concept with respect to Lacan. In my research on P. Castoriadis-Aulagnier's problematics of intersubjectivity, I noticed there were three important notions: a) the narcissistic contract drawn up between the subject and "the set in which the Ego may enter" and its identification function; b) the function of mouthpiece by the mother who is close to the psychic experiences of the child and the structuring of the psyche by the proposition of the prohibition; c) the states of alienation and the collective treatment of the wish for self-alienation (Kaës, 1998).
- 5) N.T. *ectopisme* and *polytopisme* in French
- 6) N.T. *extratopiques* in French

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