

Corporeity in psychotic communication: an institutional experience of group psychoanalytical therapy

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Abstract

This work is a clinic contribution on corporeity in a psychotic communication into an institutional experience of psychoanalytic group of psychotherapy in a Residential therapeutic Community of a mental health department.

Ethimologically “to communicate” means create a relationship, to get on well.

So the body into a group structures a hard power of communication, it is a place and a centre of conflict of pscopathology in which emotions lie-unthinkable emotions inscribed in sense datum.

The gamma function into the group let to receive the psychotic communication and elaborate a shared mental sphere.

Key-words: residential therapeutic community, psychotic communication, corporeity, group, alfa function, gamma function.

This paper is a clinical contribution about corporeity in the psychotic communication into an institutional experience of psychoanalytic group of psychotherapy in the Residential therapeutic Community “La Taranta” of a mental health department of ASL NA1 Centro.

The community is a place with a communitary model as operative methodology, based on the support on living and living together, with a constantly evolving psychic field that goes “beyond the people and not corresponds even to their relations”. (Neri 1995).

The historic area represents the group memory and express itself in the institutional area trough founding fantasies and emotions (“La Tarantola” represents the illness and the treatment is the “Taranta”, a ritual therapeutic dance to cure tarantula bite): hopes full of trust in patients transformation covered by thick and heavy layer of immobility and unthinkableness, marked by long stories of institutionalization.

The actual area includes a relational space, indicative of “here and now” of mental and corporal phenomena in a communitary dimension of gradual integrations of patients whit therapeutic projects on term. The past, the present and the future are all present in a configuration similar to the spiral. (Corbella 2003).

In the institutional area the basic level of fantasies end emotions include a syncretic-symbiotic plan with stories of a undifferentiated kind, that represent a prolongation and extension of the sensorial and corporeal fisicity.

Group's representation as a body is present in the oldest metaphors of the philosophical, religious and politic thought. Kaës writes: "The imagine of the body as a group sends back to the imagine of the group as a body" (1996).

The corporeity is designed as a complex group of sensations that originate emotional beings, as "a place where is placed the hidden alchemy of the living into the other one". (D'Errico, 1992)

The body can be considered as object of sensorial perception or ad active subject, as a part of Ego, of what is a indispensable fundament.

According to Freud is first of all a corporeal entity. (1922a). The affections have at the beginning an only corporeal register; the reality corresponds to the effects that produce in the body. These body's answers are corporeal correlates to affections, to emotional beings "the instinct appears as a borderline concept between the psychic and the somatic, as the stimulus psychic representative, that are originated by the inside of the body and go to the psyche, as a measure of the operations, that are required to the psychic sphere because of its connection with the corporeal one" (Freud 1905). Then a psychoanalytic speech without the corporeity dimension in not possible.

According to Freud the instinct represents an "hinge concept", meaning that is places in the theoretical area of discrimination between the somatic and the psychic, the hook point between the biologic and the psychic life. The instinct, coming from the body, enrolled into the body, express itself into the body, l'avant coup, the first hook to the reality, around which took place the constitution of the psychism (Todarello, 1992).

The beginning of the own being in the world consciousness pass trough the being as a body consciousness, arriving to the being as a person feeling.

Considering that on the epistemology level the cognitive productive way is that one that pass through the experience, my intention is giving some reflection elements about a group institutional group in a Residence.

The mental field is an analytic community group, "focused on" once a week with the finality to get and to use the patients language with the contents that they bring, in an hearing and contained pains areas space, strongly impregnated of confusion and fragmentation status.

I'm going to describe a clinical fragment about a ten members session, including me, after the including of a patient in community with a project on term.

The proto-mental system of a being that is a whole in which "the physic, the psychological and the mental are undifferentiated (Bion, 1961) can be observed completely just in group, so, before the group meeting, hardly can be realized the valence, that is the spontaneous and instinctive combination (emotional) ability in the group, that, according to the basic manifest thesis, is instantaneous, involuntary and unexpected. So proto-mental phenomena are a group function and, then, they have to be studied into the group.

I introduce the session thinking about what Francesco Corrao said: “ a genial part of Bion though, that can be taken as model, is that he used his mental apparatus in order to get himself on the same wavelength of the psychotic though and then to get out of this”.

The new patient is the first talking:

Cinzia.: I want to come back home, but my mother doesn't want me, I want to go away.

She asks to Giancarlo: how long have you been here?

Giancarlo: by 3 minutes in this room (and laughs)- she looks at me and says: now Cristina is under cowboys trolley under the four wheels, then we are attacked by the Indians and the Mexicans save us.

Giancarlo suggest in his corporeity his own psychopathological mode of operation: the posture and the gestures are rigid with motorial stereotypes that evoke a sense of impotence about him.

Suddenly Ugo enter, after having knocked the ingress door of SIR.

(Ugo is a patient who, during daily life shows a muscular iperactivity connected to the need of an immediate discharge at motor level).

Mara (nurse): Ugo did you play hard to get you?

Ugo: Do not wish the other stuff and the other woman I'm religious and I respect religious things, Egypt things.

Elvira (who express a strong restlessness on the corporeal plane, moves “his” chair out of the circle altering the group border circle) comes: Merry Christmas, is transmission? Life is evil and goes wrong to men and women, to the children you can't give biscuits they die stifled.

Communication appears incomprehensible, a senseless thing that impregnate all the field. But not seems to appear to look for the sense, instead to succeed being in contact with explosive and fragmented contents that generate destructive powerful emotions and play a blocking and inhibitor in the though process.

Giancarlo: they want to build again houses that already exist.

The patient doesn't appear able to recognize body imagines functions that concern the spatial world and the human relations one. But seems to start a containment possibility of group confusion with an unlimited body, broked in fragments, a dissociated body, in which each fragment is felt like a separated body, without connection with the others fragments. Excellent!

Patrizia: doctor I often see little animals, they look like ants, but they are not ants I see them near to my feet when I pass trough piazza Sannazaro. What I suppose to do they drive me crazy!!! They made me up an African invoice, can you take away it by me?

The body imagine dissociation become body imagine destruction: fragments appears again in the exterior world as visual hallucinations because the body is not intended as a unity and splits in a number of fragments.

Ugo: we are finding women in television, Florence monster is in television, but is has to find him.

Ugo: That tree is not seen – when she feels bad she feels really bad- true truths can't exist I tell the truth. Who tells lies tells things that doesn't exist. When people is behind shoulders is just false.

Ugo feels her body as an empty container, that has lost its content, then something has taken the place of this empty: the tree. Now there's not just a lost body, un-lived but there's tree and human body.

That patient has created a body-tree "that can't be seen" but "when she feels bad she feels really bad".

Tommaso: To that one who is telling the truth give an horse, in ancient time people says like this, my brother always said this.

Ugo: is better not to know than to understand.

The patient doesn't know who he is, why did he left his body, and then also the memory and the feeling, living out of himself, out of his own body.

Giovanna: here they always take me shower they always wash me and they never conclude something. A girl come and take me shower and then she put me dirty clothes. Shower hurts. With the shower you can die. Is that right Giancarlo?

Giancarlo: yes, it is. The shower hurts. Too many showers hurt to the skin.

In the group seems to circulate persecutory anxiety about institution.

Giovanna: doctor do you want to give me earrings? When I was little I took small and golden ones. The other day I escaped, I wanted to go to my place, my old place in Sanità, but I didn't find it. There was an house all ruined, they told me it was destroyed and now there's not anymore.

Tommaso: I was at the Borgo Marinaro, at my place, that one were my people. Those ones of Pallonetto make me escaping. The took my house. My family as a cursed story. My father was forced to marry my mother who came from Pallonetto of S.lucia and he was forced to marry her. From that moment all the problems starts. My family was destroyed, everyone hated us, my father abandoned my mother who went to my madhouse. I went to madhouse too, for a lot of years. This room, this house Is my. I'm the house owner. Now the madhouse time is passed, but a tree always have roots, to have the tree you need roots that can't be fired. The group express return to the search of the origin, the members start to narrate themselves, to feel "on the same boat" with a sense of belonging.

Cinzia: when you speak you look like my father, while Emilia looks like my mother. Last night we have watched TV in my room. Emilia has a daughter who comes and finds her.

Emilia: one who claims to be my daughter comes here, but I didn't made her. I don't know her.

Emilia starts singing "don't talk me about love, you will not talk anymore about it now we are at the end of a love" (and she stars laughing).

Giovanna: ok let's laugh for a bit. We always get bored here. They are always smoking and talking about the past. The doctor wants us to talk between us because if you don't talke you are "n'zallanuto" (stunned and confused) and you die.

With the entry of new patient the group seems to have activated the possibility of the search of an identity talking about the dependence relation, elaborate the pain and live in a condition in which there's an incredible affection need. I can think of the group pain experience, the Koinodinia of Francesco Corrao (from koinosis= mixture and odoyne= pain, psychic pain).

Giancarlo: when a person looks the world switches off, there are three or four important sentences. If is not possible to make that famous speech ...is there something, doctor? At this point, I answer: What do you think? Is there something?

Giancarlo: yes, I think so. You already cured me in the past. I have learned by you all the things I know but are just few things.

Ugo : I'm exploring may- the fire is in the sting- that cat with like blue staple has been very successful!!!

Mara (nurse): doctor often Ugo climbs over the wall and goes into the neighbors' garden, it can be dangerous! But she can get in or out when she wants. Why does she climb over?

Ugo I dreamt about this last night.

The space idea represent one of the first mental fragmentaries mental of the body/ Ego. The desire to climb over can means to overcome borders between the interior space, limited by a border, and an exterior one beyond of this. The patient seems to find in the group something like a "second skin", that delimits a space defined by an interior and in exterior. The group founded an identity delimiting a impermeable border between the in and the out and express the desire to go over the border.

The dream can symbolized the "here and now" of what in the group happens. But was it a dream? Or rather is the group as dream?

Bion says that "every man have to be able to dream an experience while it's happening , whether it happens into the dream whether it happen when he is awake." In fact, we know to have dreamed just when we wake up: if we don't wake up "life is just a dream".

The psychotic use words as they were things and he doesn't move in a dreams' world but in primate objects' one. This brings the consequence that the psychotic turns to real objects and tries to use them as they were ideas. So the word correspond to objects and speaking corresponds to acting.

A significant empathy with the psychotic patient can happens just in tuning with the patient Self sense in his way to feel the body. Often, deliriums and hallucinations are altered modes of operation descriptions, lived more to corporeal level than to the

mental one. The peculiarity of sensations, perceptions, orientation, attention and motor behavior reflect difficulties of corporeal experiences' integration, indispensable for a cohesive corporeal Ego development.

According to Bion alfa function is our mind's activity that, transforming sensorial impressions in alfa elements, becomes capable of oneiric thoughts. If alfa function is altered emotions are not modified and become strong Beta elements (basilar assumptions) and weak Beta elements that may underlie different group transformations processes through gamma function.

Corrao (1981) postulates gamma function's existence "that can be defined as the symmetric analog, in the group's structure, of what alfa function represent in the individual", group though ability to metabolize sensorial elements, voltages and emotions's fragments that are presents in the field.

Corrente (2001) suggests a complementarity between group's gamma function and individual's alfa function. Gamma function operates transformations that constantly feed individual alfa function, through the suspension, the momentary alfa function's numbness.

This institutional group's experience in a Residential Community was created for the need to build a field to welcome emotive not organized experiences, energetic movements, seeking texture and shape, that ones that Bion called "Thoughts without thinkers" "thoughts not thought" "unthinkable thought" that are suspended "somewhere in the air", and they have not yet found welcome in the mind, waiting to be thought. (Neri 2006).

Bion, through the "beta space" concept, introduces the hypothesis of a mental space with thoughts "not thought" and "unthinkable" in a shared mental field, a communal field, in which the psychotic communication appears like a lost of sense that sometimes impregnates all the field. Patients, closed in to a passivity and rigidity circle, live the the threat of an imminent annihilation and evoke strong, impotence and inability's strong emotions.

Hate, destructivity, envy disturb alfa function, Bion talks about "attacks to connection", attacks not just to the connection but to the mental activity that represents it.

The destructivity looks at interrupting and impede even to can think about to the connections: attack to the connection, attack to the thought, attack to the truth. (Bion 1959).

So is fundamental the elaboration of his own emotional answer, to promote gamma function in the group and tolerate the "non sense" of psychotic communication to visualize and elaborate the mental communitarian field, to wait patiently that through Ps returns D.

Psychotic situation correspond to a PS-D oscillation's block and is just this mental function, PS-D oscillation (Process: Disintegration- Integration), that allow to tolerate the "non sense" of psychotic communication.

Etymologically “to communicate” means to put in commun, to link, to establish a relations, that could initiate transformations’ processes with a group dispositive. So, the body in the group structures a strong communication power, is the place and the theatre of psychopathologic conflict, in which reside non thinkable emotions written into the sensorial.

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