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**Advances in Couple and Family Psychoanalysis
in Today's World. II**

**Introduction to the issue "Advances in Couple
and Family Psychoanalysis in Today's World. II"**

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**Broadening the gaze: theoretical understanding and clinical
approaches**

The authors whose work is presented in this issue, demonstrate their efforts to reach beyond traditional interventions, facilitating and expanding the nature of alternative techniques, for groups and families, as well as in networks and communities.

The life of the subject, the constitution of each subjectivity, the necessary inclusion of otherness, and the new forms that emerge with their need for identity recognition, generate realities for societies and the concept of their psychic health, which must be recognised and constitute a wake-up call for research and debate on the subject.

From the perspective of a continual scientific training focused on the human problems of our time, we propose continually to review and research in our fields, elements to enable critical understanding, rethinking and reconsidering the subjective and social experiences of the manifestations of distress in today's world.

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It is also our intention in this issue to remember our colleague Sonia Kleiman, who left us at a young age when she still had much to contribute with her experience and knowledge. Sonia was known for questioning ideas, forms, and structures. She proposed another way of looking at and thinking about reality. The influence of Isidoro Berenstein and Janine Puget undoubtedly left its mark.

In her article entitled “Tiempos inciertos”, which we present today, she questions the idea of a successive and ordered time and combines it with a dynamic time, where the random and the unforeseen intervene, generating other becomings. It proposes revisions of our own thinking, installing uncertainty as a counterpoint to certainty. She questions certain forms of knowledge, affirming that the capacity to question allows us to open up new ways of looking at and understanding reality; she delves into the processes involved in the formation of subjectivity and relates this to the colonisation of the unconscious, following other authors that she cites in this development. She ends her presentation with a poem by Octavio Paz in which the close relationship of otherness as an unquestionable maker of subjectivity is raised.

Dr. Elizabeth Palacios, with whom Sonia Kleiman shared many experiences, recalls her trajectory and conveys it to us in an introductory paragraph to the article.

Andrew Balfour’s work entitled “Time and Space: Dimensions of identity and relationships in dementia” proposes some reflections on how to approach dementia, privileging time and space. The author points out that the temporal dimension is fundamental to understanding the nature of the experience of the emotional encounter with the person with dementia. He also points out that in the relationships of people with dementia, psychic space is fundamentally affected, and so projective processes replace language as cognitive abilities decline. Thus, the dementia process may be characterised by experiences of loss and separation from attachment figures (or the fear of it) and feelings of insecurity, as involuntary separation and disruption of attachment bonds may be a common part of the experience.

Although it is noted as a negative aspect, that dementia can acquire “infectious” features at the level of attachment, the author stresses that, in any case, psychoanalytic practice shows that, if containment can be offered for the fragmented psychic states of dementia, some useful and reassuring emotional contact can be regained. For this containment of the person with dementia to be possible, it is vital, according to the author, that the emotional challenges of dementia care are attended to by addressing the caregivers’ need for support in order to maintain emotional contact with the person with dementia.

Drawing on attachment theory (Ainsworth, Fonagy), Balfour indicates how essential can be the caregiver’s ability to continue to think about the experience of their partner with dementia, whose attachment relationships are changing as the anchoring in their familiar relational and social world is progressively threatened. Also, drawing on aspects of Bionian theory, the author explores how in a relationship - where one partner has dementia - the burden will increasingly shift to the partner without



dementia to act as a container for their spouse, with a correlative need to ‘contain the container’, i.e. to help the caring partner process their experiences, so that they can be emotionally available to their partner with dementia.

In the work “Clinique, souffrance et attaque de la métagarance dans les familles, les institutions et le lien social”, Pierre Benghozi defines the concept of "metagarance" as the ethical responsibility of guaranteeing a sufficiently secure individual and group psychic contentment in families, institutions, and social ties, based on the bonds of filiation and affiliation. “Metagarance” takes into account the psychosocial, economic, educational, cultural, and bio-somatic conditions that allow it to be exercised, but which, under certain conditions, manifest themselves as flaws or real attacks, when the meta-guardian is no longer protective, but becomes the danger, such as an incestuous father.

The article begins with a series of reflections, such as, for example, on the circumstances conditions of the emergence of “metagarance” and what modifications do the transformation in links, at the level of families, institutional organisation, and the State, bring to “metagarances”?

With respect to clinical issues, the article leads on the relationship between the therapist’s countertransference and metagroup functioning.

The article written by Dr. Lea Setton on “El vínculo perverso en una ex-pareja” describes the weight of the trauma in a couple’s bond where perversion manifests itself between the two, making the therapeutic space a battlefield where they can unload their respective feelings of hatred carried from childhood as a thread that united them to destroy each other. The accumulation of damage to the alliance bond provoked depressive symptoms in their respective children, who were no longer able to defend themselves from their parents’ destructive hatred. The author highlights the process of moral degradation of the couple’s bond as an indicator of perversion. The central theme revolved around the aspects of the lack of reciprocal loyalty in the face of permanent attacks on it, the basic condition of the alliance. This bond showed the hypocrisy of the false alliance through constant disloyalty and the repetition of mistrust with its oscillations referring to a markedly insecure early attachment. The theoretical concepts are illustrated by means of clinical sessions. Psychotherapeutic work was challenging in the attempt to transform anger and bring pain and discomfort to the surface, but the partners in this couple who had no history of reparation used the therapeutic context as a space to stage and validate their frustration conveyed by rejection and disabling hatred.

Damian McCann’s article “They «went in two by two» – The challenge of those in open and polyamorous relationships for couple psychotherapists” is presented as an open work: the reader is invited to engage with it and express their views regarding what appears to be a distinction between “monogamous and faithful couples” and “open and polyamorous relationships”.



The article discusses the vicissitudes of intimacy and sexual desire as we move from observing a heterosexual couple into the realm of homosexual couples and, more generally, open and polyamorous couples. The cases reported always lead to triangular situations, to feeling alien, strange, excluded from the couple's game. How to find one's own voice? How to be in a position to create subjectivity in desire?

The problem of "widening the lens" to work with situations of polyamory opens up a series of difficulties which McCann himself points out at the end of his work; lack of reflection, fear of being judged, and inconsistencies with internalised values; confusion between social problems and psychoanalytic listening skills, and between observing a patient or a couple on stage and at the same time including other characters who are not present. The importance of managing the countertransference in order to think of an interpretation in these situations of open couples certainly comes to the fore. A pedagogical concern arises (the challenge for couple psychotherapists) when McCann thinks of dealing with the difficulties of other therapists or patients; it is a question of going all the way and living in one's own countertransference and therapeutic task in these situations which seem to have no "border".

Judith Pickering's work, entitled "The musical channels of communication in couple therapy", is an interesting approach to a psychoanalysis of relationships that seeks new ways of understanding the complex human processes related to the couple and the family, among others.

Pickering proposes a reformulation of the ability to be in a couple, taking as an emergent factor the musical qualities of communication, suggesting that music is the language of emotions and, therefore, the musical elements of discourse are a way of expressing emotional states.

The author hypothesises that when couples enter into states of intersubjective intimacy, their dialogue is characterised by a melodious way of speaking. This intersubjective harmonisation becomes a channel that expresses the deepest emotional states of each partner, enjoying a sense of communion and of the uniqueness of each "voice", which according to her thinking is expressed in duos, trios, and quartets of interpersonal harmony.

Conversely, when a couple goes through moments of trauma and intense psychic pain, harmony is replaced by cacophony. This emotional disharmony in the couple's relationship tends to express itself through acoustic disharmony; over dissonant tones created by a voice that shouts, rasps, barks, growls or explodes in anger, or, when speech is monotonous, disjointed, or consensual. This "entanglement" tends to manifest itself as an encrypted, repetitive, and destructively volatile relational dynamic based on mutual projective identifications, *i.e.* what the author presents as a "traumatic interlocking couple scene". Thus, the author's theoretical framework is based on the study of emotional states, in a perspective that could be taken as an extension and deepening of the postulates of the post-Kleinian school. Knowledge



of the acoustic characteristics of different emotional states, such as depression, anger and anxiety, as well as the specific characteristics of the activation of an interwoven traumatic scene, helps to alert therapists to the fact that such a change has occurred. In turn, this will help to fine-tune appropriate therapeutic responses, as the therapist remains attentive, through the acoustic underpinnings of language, to how emotional and psychological states are conveyed.

Dr. Serge Tisseron's writing on "A new familiar companion: the connected speaker or the insidious dominance of talking machines", informs us of the need to pay more attention to certain aspects of everyday reality, which we tend to incorporate as part of the necessary progress we "must" admit. Giving commands to devices that obey, talking to mechanical assistants that respond, creates a situation in which artificial intelligence challenges humans in an ever-expanding way. These previously unthinkable situations generate changes in the previous anthropological position and modify relations with machines, tending to humanise them. The creation of the digital companion aspires to position itself as a human double. Illusion becomes visible reality.

Moreover, Tisseron raises ethical problems that need to be studied and controlled because of the consequences they have on children's developmental growth, pointing out the need for parental control over the use of voice assistants by their children. He proposes age limits according to activities in the use of talking machines and robots, as they do not favour the development of speech, reasoning, and of learning rules. Finally, the author highlights the disruption in the process of learning to be and manage loneliness since the place of the other is taken by a machine. The ability to be in relationship with oneself is impoverished, emotions are altered and relationships are mediated by a deliberately falsified illusion of humanity.

Serge Tisseron ends his article by pointing to the 21st century as an era that requires human beings to recover capacities for intimacy, the possibility of relating to others, recognising emotions and regulating his relationship with the machine without ceasing to know that it is just that: a machine.