

*International Review of Psychoanalysis of Couple and Family*

**ISSN 2105-1038**

**N° 16-1/2017 – The family crisis**

**Introduction**

Daniela Lucarelli\* and Massimiliano Sommantico\*\*

In this issue, we are examining the crisis of families. But what do we mean by crisis? As we know, the term has a twofold meaning: deriving from the Greek verb “krino” that means to separate, it indicated the process of thrashing, the separation (“krisis”) of grain from husks. It also means to choose with an extended branching out of further related meanings, among them discrimination, interpretation, solution, controversy. The common trait of all these meanings is that they entail always two parties. This semantic duplicity is the main feature of crisis, a duplicity that we could refer also to psychic reality, be it intra and inter and trans subjective.

But the verb krino can also become to criticize, meaning to ponder on something, finding its pros and cons. The term crisis does not always have a negative connotation, but rather

---

\* Psychologist, psychoanalyst, full member at the IPA/SPI, and IPA recognised expert on children and adolescents. Editor in Chief of the IACFP Review (Review of the International Association of Couple and Family Psychoanalysis), chair of the Couple and Family Section of the EFPP (European Federation for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, teacher and supervisor at Istituto Winnicott *iW*, in Rome, founder member of SIPsIA (Società Italiana di Psicoterapia Psicoanalitica dell’Infanzia e dell’Adolescenza e della Coppia) in Rome, teacher and supervisor at PCF (Corso Postspecialistico di Psicoanalisi della Coppia e della Famiglia) in Rome, member of the Editorial Board of the review *Interazioni* (Franco Angeli, Milan.), author of publications on children, adolescents and couple and family psychoanalysis. [daniela.lucarelli@gmail.com](mailto:daniela.lucarelli@gmail.com)

\*\* Researcher in Clinical psychology at the University of Naples Federico II, psychologist, psychotherapist, couple and family psychoanalyst, member of the AC and of the SC of the IACFP, candidate of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, Editor in Chief of the IACFP Review, member of the editorial board of the review *Interazioni*, author of several publications on adult, couple, and family psychoanalysis. [sommanti@unina.it](mailto:sommanti@unina.it)

it is something in-between two different moments or conditions. So, we think that its etymological meaning introduces a multiplicity of views that can concern the crisis within the context and the story of a family and the crisis of the family form in the wider crisis affecting society and culture today. We decided to examine in depth both sides of the crisis since we felt it was impossible to investigate one without the other.

The first part of this issue contains articles that discuss general questions on the changes that affect links today.

Carles Pérez Testor and collaborators in their paper *La transformaciòn de la familia a principios del siglo XXI: a proposito de un caso*, describe the big changes undergone by European families in the twenty-first century. With the help of the case history of a family affected by pathological functioning, the authors show how the primary function of the family has remained intact despite huge changes, so that it is still the place for promoting growth and development in its members.

Following the suggestions of Didier Anzieu and René Kaës, Massimiliano Sommantico in *La Ciénaga. Ou le malaise dans la famille comme révélateur du Malaise dans la culture* aided by a discussion of the movie *La Ciénaga*, presents a reflection on today's discontents in civilization, dwelling on the lack of the preconscious.

Philippe Robert in *Variants sociaux, invariants psychiques?* shows how the processes discovered by Freud are still active, although the unconscious can be seen today in various configurations of the link. The author suggests that the current changes can affect containment in families, especially through authority and generational barriers. The author also presents a reflection on the needed adjustments of the analytical setup and on countertransference work.

Roberto Losso and Ana Packciarz Losso in *Crisis en la familia, crisis en la pareja* show how we can think of developmental processes in individuals, couples and families as a series of crises that challenge the individual and the group. But they also show that crises represent an opportunity for change in relation to mourning. With the help of two clinical vignettes, they suggest that changes in today's families can be seen as a possible increase in narcissism.

Simona Taccani and Cristina Zorzato in *Couple's link, family's link: critical nodes and changing processes* highlight the critical issues in the process of change for couples and families. Their focus consists in a group, psychic, and bodily approach to families and couples, so that they can describe them as group-objects with a specific intersubjective reality where intra and inter-generational alliances, conflicts, and contracts are deployed.

Starting from an anthropological approach, Sonia Kleiman in *¿En qué nos interrogan los vínculos hoy?* discusses the need for thinking the changes in today's families in a different way, focusing in particular on link configurations.

The other articles concern more specifically clinical issues.

Ludovica Grassi in *Family as a transformative tool* suggests the idea of seeing families as an essential structure for the establishment of alterity and continuity. The case history presented shows a type of analytical work where possible creative changes in family structure can provide new solutions to traumatic losses and separations due to emigration, overcoming the alternative between deathly repetition and terrifying otherness.

Based on the theorizations of Didier Anzieu and René Kaës, Cristina Calarasanu in *Sortie interdite* describes today's discontent as linked to the pathologies of psychic containers, suggesting the idea that distress, now central in today's pathologies, is related to the question of boundaries. We can find a damaged container that leads to a motion towards group fusion that puts the family in a regressive position and causes the overcoming of boundaries. A clinical case presented is discussed with reference to Bion and Meltzer and shows the containing function of treatment.

Damian McCann in *The couple and family in transition* discusses a seldom presented situation that can challenge our theoretical references and is encountered when a couple or a family has to face the gender change of one partner or parent. With the help of clinical vignettes, the author describes the important role that can be played by couple and family analysis in helping these individuals reach a balanced solution to the question of gender change.

Ausilia Sparano in *Suspended on a rope: the family unconscious as seen in a consultation with the parents of a preterm neonate* examines the ghost shared by a couple whose pre-term daughter was hospitalized in a neonatal intensive care unit. The family is in crisis and the author examines in particular the compulsive mechanisms of repetition and identification that this family displays and their defenses towards the pre-term birth experienced as a traumatic event written transgenerationally in the family's unconscious. This issue includes also a Vocabulary section, where the word "*Crisis*" is defined by Rosa Jaitin who presents René Kaës' elaboration on it this, and Reviews of the following books: Anna Maria Nicolò, Pierre Benghozi and Daniela Lucarelli "*Families in transformation*" reviewed by David E. Scharff; and René Kaës "*L'extension de la psychanalyse. Pour une métapsychologie de troisième type*" reviewed by Massimiliano Sommantico.