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**Aspects of the technique in contemporary psychoanalysis
with the couple and the family**

BOOK REVIEW

Roberto Losso, Lea S. de Setton, David E. Scharff, **The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis. The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Riviere.** London, Karnac Books. New International Library of Group Analysis, 2017
Book Review by Elisabeth Palacios*

Pichon Rivière's ideas and those produced by some of his contemporary colleagues embedded the clinical field in mental health hospital practice and in mental health way of thinking in Buenos Aires for many decades. For those that have been able to train in such an atmosphere our way of looking at mental illness and human suffering makes us carry that special sort of imprinting that makes us a unique product of the Río de la Plata, messengers of a long-standing tradition. Pichon has left a legacy that affects psychiatry and psychoanalysis to this day in Argentina and far from its frontiers since an important diaspora of psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health workers left the country for different difficult and sad social and political circumstances. Most carrying in their thinking Pichonian ideas would they realize or not that this was so.

The English speaking community has to be grateful to David Scharff, Roberto Losso and Lea Setton for giving them the chance to read this fantastic selection of Pichon

* elipalacios2609@gmail.com

Rivière's works as well as the chapters that some of his followers have written making Pichon as actual as ever.

The book starts with the series editor foreword where Earl Hopper expresses his appreciation for giving readers north of the equator the opportunity to read Pichon Rivière's works in English language. The idea of a social unconscious in terms of theory and practice was echoed by several authors in different European countries and in the River Plate by Pichon with a particular fusion of several schools of thought. The preface written by the Argentine Psychoanalyst, our actual IPA president, Virginia Ungar places Pichon as a pioneer, a foot soldier, one who goes ahead to initiate a new path in thought. Mentioning the wide range of interests of this outstanding psychoanalyst always transmitting a passion for the clinical work.

David Scharff, Roberto Losso and Lea Setton introduce us the life and work of this pioneer showing us the transformations between intrapsychic and interpsychic life, being the first one ever to describe the therapeutic process as that one that is established in a dialectic situation with the analyst in the here and now and which by means of interpretation disturbs the pre-existing mental organization evoking *emergents* that guide us as a compass, showing us our way and the technic that needs to be tuned in the therapeutic field .

The book appears exactly the year of the anniversary of Pichon's one hundred birthday. He was born in Geneva on June 25th, 1907 came to Argentina in 1910 and lived first in an inhospitable region inhabited by the Guarani Indians, and later on, in the province of Corrientes. All these interesting details about his life are in the introduction and in the chapter written by the poet and journalist Vicente Zito Lema. What we are told about Pichon's beginnings in life is fundamental to understand his intellectual productions. Following Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (1955) thinking is an activity that must be related to other social activities within the context of group experience, as a reflection of the societal process in which the thinker is inevitably enmeshed, thus the ideas produced are conceived as existentially determined. The reader could not be able to circumscribe Rivière's thinking and his production of knowledge without this valuable historical background.

Pichon Rivière's writings include six chapters, a set of very well selected papers, that can give us a good picture of the wide range of interests that the author had. We are first introduced to his thinking on the new problems that psychiatry needed facing, published in 1971, where the author addresses the etiology of diverse clinical formations where he found a deep nucleus of depression that clinicians need to deal with in the analytical work. In the next chapter, we are presented to his theory of the illness, considering it an unsuccessful attempt of cure. His proposal of four principles that govern the conformation of normal and pathological structures and the notions that assist us in understanding how structures are formed: the link, the role, and the spokesperson. In the chapter on observations on the transference in psychotic patients, published in 1961, we are told, how we have to address patients suffering from schizophrenia. We have to be aware that they have suffered important traumatic experiences during childhood, a time where his ego and his capacity to address

reality were not yet fully developed, constituting the basis for a long-term illness and a way of dealing with life and human interaction. The fourth chapter brings us to one of Pichon Rivière's most outstanding contributions to working with groups. This paper is written by him and by three outstanding figures of psychoanalysis in Buenos Aires at that time: José Bleger, David Liberman and Edgardo Rolla. They pose a particular way of addressing the work with groups, from the perspective of the task. Following Kurt Lewin, who considered the group as a total situation, Pichon and his colleagues consider the group centered in the task. Thus, the group has to fulfill the task, be it learning, a sport, institutional work. All the difficulties that are encountered, including personal problems, have to be tackled in order to accomplish the task. The fifth chapter approaches the subject of family groups from an operative perspective, where the author shows us that the fundamental therapeutic action has the objective of diminishing psychotic anxieties in order to prevent stereotyped defensive mechanisms that are the real illness that prevents an active adjustment to reality. The sixth chapter introduces us to the treatment of family groups as collective psychotherapy, showing the concepts and operational steps that the therapist must have in mind to address the treatment of the family group. The seventh chapter translates a fundamental paper from the notes taken by one of his students during the seminars he delivered in the Argentine Psychoanalytical Association. In it, Pichon, setting off from the notions of object relations in the Kleinian tradition of the fifties, wanted to prove psychoanalytic concepts with the experiences of social work. He developed his concept of the link. This notion has influenced and inspired many thinkers in the Río de La Plata, who in turn have developed interesting and creative contributions the understanding of couple, family, group and institutional interactions with novel contributions. The seventh chapter is a valuable contribution to the psychology of art, where he analysed the work and life of the French poet born in Uruguay, Isidore Lucien Ducasse, count of Lautremont. The concept of the uncanny, useful in the psychology of art, is seen by Pichon as a privileged access to the exploration of the unconscious in the context of applied psychoanalysis. The last chapter reproduces a paper written with Ana de Quiroga on a contribution to the psychology of everyday life, articles that appeared in *Primera Plana*, a magazine of general interest very popular at that time in Argentina. He addresses football taken as a signifier in a social context. He understood football as a structure in which politics, economy, philosophy, logic, and psychology from a social point of view are present. The second part of the book contains a series of very interesting essays on Pichon Rivière's theoretical and clinical practice. In this section, the readers will also be able to depict Pichon's personality, his work as a teacher, his openness to ideas in the moving chapter written by Dr. Roberto Losso. You will enjoy Pichon's presence in his words alongside with the most outstanding theoretical concepts as he learnt them from his beloved professor. Rosa Jaitin tells us about the effects of the transmission that Pichon's ideas had on her. She brings in some family details and afterwards introduces us to teaching and research issues and to the concept of proto-body image developed before birth by the stimuli of intrauterine life and to the notion of patho-

rhythm referred to the pathology in the rhythm of the family relationships which gave her the opportunity to widen the concept of epistemic link and the obstacles to symbol formation. She also tells us about the importance of operative groups in Europe. The preface to the French edition of the book *Social Psychology of Psychoanalysis* (Alberto Eiguer, Rosa Jaitin, and Vicente Zito Lema) by René Kaës is translated here. René Kaës introduces us to the figure of Pichon Riviere and his contribution to social psychology and the different notions that he considered in his conceptual referential and operative schema based among some others in the work of Freud, Klein, Fairbairn, Mead and Lewin, Bachelar, Sartre and Lefebvre. He also describes Pichon's fifty years of revolutionary innovations in The Borda Neuropsychiatric Hospital. He also describes the differences that he finds with his own theoretical points of view. In the following chapter, Rosa Marcone interviews Ana Quiroga, an interview originally published in 2011 in *La Marea*, a Spanish magazine. The reader will be able to understand the personality of this pioneer from first hand from Ana and their close intellectual and familiar relationship. The chapter written by Alberto Eiguer, another disciple, introduces us to the legacy of Pichon Riviere and to a good number of concepts coined by him: the link as a bipersonal, tri-psycho relationship, the third as a concept that opens new perspectives in the analytic situation. Eiguer brings a clinical example of the clinical work that he shared with Pichon Riviere introducing us to his own clinical appraisal.

The last chapter of this part, written by David Scharff, originally printed in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, describes core conceptualizations on the object relations theory derived from contributions by Klein, Fairbairn, Bion, Winnicott and Bowlby showing the difference with Pichon's approach, looking for similarities and differences in an attempt to make us clear the contributions of Riviere's innovative notions.

Before the final notes, the bibliography and the index we find a fantastic glossary by Roberto Losso and Lea Setton, a brief dictionary with Pichon's most important notions and with clear explanations, very useful to all readers.

As you are able to see, this is an outstanding volume that will allow the English speaking community, interested in Pichon Rivière's contributions to the understanding of human psychology and human links, to appreciate his wide range of interests, his creativity and his passion for life and humankind. An inspiring book that deserves a special place among those of contemporary psychoanalytic creators.

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