

International Review of Psychoanalysis of Couple and Family

N° 2007/2 - The psychoanalytical process

**THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL PROCESS IN THE COUPLE
AND THE FAMILY**

BY ANNA NICOLÒ

This issue comes out in a new format. It will have two sections. One will house a thematic core, whilst the other will house contributions from our readers on different themes.

Our aim is for a deeper and more thorough debate around a clinical or theoretical subject by authors with different viewpoints, an enriching opportunity for confronting ideas. But at the same time the journal will continue to converse with it's readers through articles that touch on the many different aspects of our discipline.

The focus of this number is the psychoanalytical process in the couple and the family. There aren't many writings on the psychoanalytical process, and if we observe a little deeper we find the very concept is open to controversy and ambiguity.

Weinshel (1984), comments there is no any real agreement on the term, Ritvo says the concept is "a sort of conglomerate", whilst Loewald (1970) warns that research in this direction is full of snares and difficulties.

Although in Meltzer's well-known classic on the 'process', his treatment of the succession and development of the patient seems a bit too theoretical and formal, there are however noteworthy data that emerge and contribute to form the 'process'

in its temporal development. In fact, time is the crucial element in the 'process', and Etchegoyen reminds us that while the analytical situation refers to space, the 'process' undoubtedly needs time. Also Jaroslavski, in his article in this present number, puts forward the question of time, observing that while "the analytical situation is synchronic,...the 'psychoanalytical process' is diachronic".

However, the question of the length of the analysis cannot be determined beforehand like an antibiotic cure, it would be useless or even damaging. The time of the succession of the various phases differs from patient to patient and also depends on the analyst.

What sort of differences are we looking at when the 'analytical process' is concerned with couples and families? Do different settings bring about a mutation in the course of the 'process'? Is the 'process' influenced by the objectives of the therapy or the psychoanalytical therapy with couples and families? In so far as much there is a difference, does it differ from individual analysis?

We could try to relate the development in time on one hand, with the transformation of the relation between the analyst and the patient, the patient with him/herself, and in the case of couples and families, the transformation of the ties between each member on the other hand.

Within this container, transformations will come about, caused by the experiences that the members will have among themselves and with the analyst. Inevitably the models from which the analyst is inspired together with his/her presence, ability and particular qualities with which he/she is endowed will have an enormous effect on these transformations.

In this issue, we have three authors who through complex argumentation on the psychoanalytical process articulate the model that guides them best in their work.

The first is the Losso couple. They not only illustrate the course of the 'process' but in particular they dwell on the very foundations that orientate their work with couples and families. The image that the

Lossos are able to gauge from Pichon Riviere of a therapeutic process as being “circular, in the form of a spiral”, is particularly suggestive in that it shows up three significant moments: what in actual fact is taking place in the field, the interpretation and what is emerging, and above all the dialectical dimension that characterizes the ‘process’.

Jaroslavski also describes the elements that characterize his work and his theory of family functionality. Tisseron, on the other hand, shifts the focus from the ‘process’ of the cure in therapy to the ‘process’ of the cure in institutions. Tisseron tries to keep the ‘process’ of private therapy and therapy in the institutions as close as possible if it wasn't for the problem of private matters that health workers and therapists have in their possession of the families in cure, often influencing their counter-transference. Thus we find the problem of secrecy coming to the fore in an urgent and creative way and not for the first time, as Tisseron in the past treated this subject with pertinence.

-An example of transformation is illustrated in clinical material kindly offered by Blassel and commented on by Lucarelli and Tavazza. We observe a difficult moment where a couple decide once again to contact each other in the psychoanalytical process that has a traumatic dimension.

- We also see within a transformative process that is continually changing while it evolves, the adaptability of the analyst to the needs of the couple and other patients, always sensitive to their capacities of containing and working-through, respecting the difficulties and not forcing the patients' capacity to contain the anxiety.

Anna Nicolò considers the question of interpretation that seemingly is out of the focus of the issue's theme but in reality is akin. The use of interpretation is observed in the setting with couples and families. She also touches on the many dimensions of interpretation, in particular, those of bonds in the present, those of generational bonds and those of the interior worlds of everybody.

Other five authors consider different themes from the issue's focus: Alberto Eigner, David Maldavsky, Diana Norsa, Lucrezia Baldassarre, Valdemiro Pellicanò

Albert Eigner brings to light the paradox of narcissism, he writes, even though it is opposed to the object, it is nevertheless the source of

binding, and it is known that these very family bonds in turn favour healing of the weakened narcissistic membrane.

David Maldavsky describes the clinical problems relating to difficult contact caused by devitalization mixed up with violence and crises of anxiety.

Italian authors, Diana Norsa and Lucrezia Baldassare, write on the concepts of intimacy, collusion and complicity in psychoanalysis of the couple, taking up a theme already treated by D.Norsa in her book written with Zavattini.

Valdemiro Pellicano observing a couple, writes about the effect of early, traumatic experiences on an Ego that doesn't have sufficient defence mechanisms. He demonstrates how, thanks to the setting of the couple, dramatic situations that were not able to be verbalized, were able to find through a renewed transference a path towards expression and transformation.

The theme of this issue has not been easy nor do we feel it is resolute. There are still many aspects to explore and we consider this issue a 'work in progress'. The psychoanalytic method has allowed us to use free associations on the theme but perhaps we are not on the right path. We hope our readers will provide us with a stimulus, criticism, or a reflection on an interesting theme that still has great potential.