

Comment to: *Interview with Corrado Pontalti in conversation with Fabio Vanni*

Rita Verzari*

I find Dr. Pontalti's starting point very interesting. He emphasises how, starting with Freud, psychoanalytic clinic practice can be read as the result of an age and therefore of a culture, a society and human groups existing with precise codes within a precise historical epoch.

In his work, Freud was dealing with the distress of young women outside their family context, a situation that would have been unthinkable in relation to the socio-anthropological constraints of the previous era.

In his dialogue with Fabio Vanni, Pontalti offers us a rich series of useful examples to highlight how socio-anthropological meanings change as historical vicissitudes proceed and how they modify the modalities of the clinical practice over time.

It therefore becomes clear that, in our clinical work, it is essential to keep in mind the socio-anthropological scenario in which both we and our patients are immersed.

As Kaes (2005) says, the metapsychic guarantors that act as a network between the subject and the social context in which he or she lives are necessary. "The transformations we are dealing with concern the major framing and regulating structures of social formations and process: myths and ideologies, beliefs and religion, authority and hierarchy. The cracks, disorganisations and recompositions of these meta-social guarantors of social life affect the metapsychic guarantors of psychic life, *i.e.* the formations and processes of the psychic environment on which the psyche of each subject is based and structured".

The dialogue between Vanni and Pontalti seems to me to be along these lines, in which the intention is not to oppose the social *versus* the psychic, nor to treat them separately, but to think about articulating them.

Pontalti focuses on the family in our Western culture and how it has

*Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Area G partner, Torino. E-mail: verzaririta@gmail.com

gradually emerged as a place of fragility in the collective imagination. This has certainly conditioned both our clinical work and the experience that this image reverberates on the parental couple.

One cannot but agree with Pontalti in arguing that the fragility of the family in our culture seems to be due both to the radical change in localisations (from small towns to large cities with the progressive loss of belonging to a local community) and to the subsequent nuclearization of the family community, which from a social community has become a relational community. In addition, the mobilisation that has taken place and continues to take place in almost all nations, has done away with the guarantee given by the community of reference and the rituals that handed down the internal rules of the family in which the codes were clear and strong. To quote Bauman (2002), the malaise in post-modernity, characterised by hedonism, narcissism and emptiness has led to a reduction in transgenerational transmission with a critical break in the continuity of established and shared values.

Psychoanalysis, in relation to all this, has found itself operating, not without difficulty and reluctance, a progressive modification of the setting in its work with children and adolescents. Indeed, today most psychoanalysts and psychotherapists working with children and adolescents no longer doubt the importance of working with parents and families.

In general, psychoanalysts and psychotherapists today are more aware of the need to use units of analysis other than those of the dyad in care settings and to look at the quality of the bonding and the quality of the affections between people.

Dr Pontalti's reflections illustrate very clearly what the risks are when this does not happen, especially in the area of the developmental age: an area in which the symptomatologic precursors are organised that risk paving the way for long years of psychiatry and chronicisation.

How to intervene? Pontalti suggests the importance of considering the profound changes that have taken place in the pact between family and society. As a function of these, family and social environment have lost attunement and unity. Against this backdrop, it is important to study this structural hiatus between forms of community in greater depth in order to foster a more fluid evolutionary development of the individual, family groups and society.

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