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PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE POWER OF DECONSTRUCTION-RECONSTRUCTION
OF SYMBOLIC, SEMIOTIC, AND EXISTENTIAL LIFE EXPERIENCES
– THE TALKING CURE IN SEVERE TRAUMA

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ABSTRACT

The linear approach to reality that supports the division of human existence into “have(s) and have-not(s),” as any dichotomy, enables simplification and the perceived expectation of control which, in turn, leads to the organization of solutions to these black-and-white problems.

This reductive approach has some advantages, but it blocks the way to an alternative, which accepts the risks of an open system approach. This alternative approach may focus on complexity and not on problem solving quick-fixes. The key issue is that while partial and local solutions may be searched for and used, simultaneously, their intrinsic limitations are constantly being questioned. This implies that their frailties may be dealt with through continuous openness to better answers and to greater degrees of understanding.

Meaning-making, symbolic reasoning and open interpretation are examples of approaches that characterize a human being’s capacity to question and to inquire. That may be seriously limited through the experience of severe traumatic events. Trauma leads to closure and to the interruption of the natural developmental processes of mental growth. Psychoanalysis offers powerful theoretical and therapeutic insights that have opened the ground for intervention in these cases. This intervention is complex in itself, and the workings of the talking cure may be better understood through their impact at symbolic, semiotic and existential levels of life as it is experienced, both by the patient and by the psychoanalyst.

The present paper addresses these processes and argues that relational psychoanalysis, which is centred on the dynamic experiences on the analytic pair, are crucial both to understand the power of psychoanalysis and to understand the process of this cathartic healing talking cure itself.

Key-words: *mental growth, development, trauma, psychoanalytic cure, symbolic reasoning, semiotics, existentialism, relational psychoanalysis.*

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Psicanálise e o poder da desconstrução-reconstrução das dimensões simbólica,
semiótica e existencial da experiência de vida
– a cura pela fala no trauma agudo

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RESUMO

A perspectiva dicotómica e redutora, a preto e branco, que divide a existência humana entre “os que têm e os que não têm”, não importa a que factor diga respeito, factor entendido aqui como problema a ser resolvido, permite a simplificação e a percepção de uma expectativa de controlo, a qual, por sua vez, leva à organização de soluções para estes problemas. Esta abordagem redutora tem algumas vantagens. Contudo, bloqueia as saídas que explorem alternativas ligadas a abordagens de final aberto, uma vez que não permite aceitar esse tipo de risco. Estas abordagens alternativas focam a atenção na complexidade e rejeitam a busca de respostas automáticas e minimalistas. A questão central é a de que soluções parciais e locais podem ser procuradas enquanto, simultaneamente, as suas limitações intrínsecas são tidas em conta e, ainda, tais soluções são permanentemente questionadas de forma construtiva. Assim, estas abordagens alternativas implicam que as fragilidades podem ser geridas através da abertura contínua a melhores soluções e a níveis crescentes de entendimento dos fenómenos em causa. A construção de sentido, o raciocínio simbólico e a interpretação aberta são exemplos de abordagens que caracterizam a capacidade do ser humano para questionar e para inquirir, as quais, estas capacidades, podem estar seriamente limitadas pela experiência de acontecimentos traumáticos graves. O trauma leva ao fechamento e à interrupção dos processos naturais de desenvolvimento e de crescimento mental. A psicanálise oferece quer poderosas concepções teóricas, quer eficazes abordagens terapêuticas, as quais permitiram abrir caminho para a intervenção nestes casos de trauma agudo e grave. Esta intervenção é complexa em si mesma. O processo de funcionamento desta cura pela palavra pode ser melhor entendido através do impacto ao nível simbólico, semiótico e existencial da vida, tal como esta é experimentada, quer pelo paciente, quer pelo analista. O presente artigo aborda estes processos e argumenta que a psicanálise relacional, centrada nas experiências de relacionamento dinâmico entre o par analítico, são cruciais para a análise e compreensão do poder da psicanálise e do processo de cura em si mesmo – a cura catártica pela fala.

Não se verificam conflitos de interesse.

Palavras chave: *crescimento mental, desenvolvimento, cura psicanalítica, raciocínio simbólico, semiótica, existencialismo e psicanálise relacional.*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an analysis of trauma through the broader, multidimensional, lenses of the civilisation issues that are at stake. It argues that misconceptions of and reductionistic approaches to certain civilisation based dominant thinking present serious limitations in regards to the capacity to interpret limit-situations such as severe trauma.

Once the broader picture is misaligned with reality, offering a more complex and subtle perspective of this reality, then there is a sequence of limitations that may prevail. Part of these limitations is the consequence of an excessive abstraction from the experience of life, from how life is lived. Therefore, there is the need to highlight how trauma analysis may be integrated in the life-long processes of meaning-making, that is, of making sense of existence. Furthermore, this analysis must take into account this experience of being alive, both in daily quotidian life and in intensive turning-points, both positive and negative, as happens in limit-situations.

The present work is supported by both psychoanalytic and philosophical literature. The relational approach to psychoanalysis is crucial, as it addresses the issues of intersubjectivity, which may go the furthest way possible in terms of interpreting psychoanalysis as a continuation of how life itself is lived. This focus on how life is experienced enables the integration of the psychoanalytic process in an effective way, one which considers both sides of the analytic pair. Further still, it assumes the frailties and power of both sides, both analyst and patient.

More importantly, relational psychoanalysis is patient-centred. That is, it unconditionally shifts the balance of power to the patient. The patient's empowerment creates the best possible conditions for the emergence of his or her full potential. No matter the seemingly chaotic state, de-structured reasoning and dysfunctional modes of existence, there must be total faith that the little power that remains in the patient's own hands will be sufficient to invert the previously fixed vicious circle that imprisons him or her into themselves.

This insight, this patient-centred focus, must first come from the analyst. Critically, it must be grounded in a thorough familiarity with the analyst's, as well as civilisation's, dominant thinking, limitations and misconceived perceptions. Only from this foothold is it possible to break the walls of passivity and accommodation to that which renders humans infinitely miserable in terms of their experience of how life itself is lived.

The relational tradition of psychoanalysis may be traced back to Bion (1984) and Winnicott (2000), as well as to the Portuguese authors, such as Matos (2006) and Dias (2008). Psychoanalysis, existentialism and semiotics have been explored through different angles by a myriad of thinkers, from Jung (1959), to Frankl (1970), Lacan (2004), and Kristeva (1998). In the twentieth century, semiotics (the study of *how* meaning is created) has been grounded in the works of two giants, Saussure (1959) and Peirce (1955). Existentialism and ontological phenomenology, from life philosophy to practical philosophy, and to anti-philosophy, also covers a wide spectrum of authors, including Heidegger (1962), Jaspers (1971), Henry (1975), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Ricoeur (1981), Gil (1996), Wittgenstein (1958) and Foucault (1970).

As this paper focuses on *how* life itself is lived and on how such lived experience is framed by our worldviews, and there is no limit to the literature that may support this positioning. In particular, the focus of this work is on the lived experience framed by worldviews that are, in turn, framed by the civilisation specificities and idiosyncrasies that offer a historical context and a geographical environment to such cosmology or worldview.

Biographical texts (e.g., Hillesum, 1996), as well as literature in general (e.g., Llansol, 1994; Lispector, 1943; Arendt, 2007; Riccobono, 2011), are prolific in offering such interpretations and insights, of both life as it is experienced and of how civilisation frames that experience.

1. SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES AND PSYCHOANALYTIC PRACTICE

The effectiveness of psychoanalytic practice is rooted in contemporary perceptions of how humans think about themselves, that is, how humans frame their thought through their civilisation lenses' dominant-thinking. This section addresses the importance of self-critical practices in scientific

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communities, and of how the identification of such thread may lead to new directions in terms of how psychoanalysis may manifest its full potential.

In Western society and the contemporary world, science is central. Many civilisation-based misconceptions are made visible through the frailties of scientific processes. These processes include knowledge production and knowledge sharing, and include both individual and collective dimensions of such knowledge production and sharing.

The impact of misconceptions is particularly visible in terms of the fundamental role of scientific communities in validating and acknowledging disruptive contributions to science. This validation and acknowledgement implies that scientific communities are actively exercising their critical capacity, due to the novelty forces questioning previously taken-for-granted assumptions, that is, previous misconceived perceptions of reality. This de-constructive and positively enhancing self-critique positioning taken by scientific communities, is primordial if one wants science to be at the service of humankind and of common good, as the Enlightenment movement proclaimed.

An example of this type of disruptive contribution to science has been the role assumed by philosophy of science itself (e.g., Kuhn, 1962; Popper, 1959), as well as by disruptive contributions to science in general (e.g., Polanyi, 1958; Lewin, 1951; Lévi-Strauss, 1963).

This paper claims that Freud's science is disruptive, because it extends novelty to its limits. More importantly, it argues that this disruptive innovation, this over a century old science of psychoanalysis, has a long way to go to be able to integrate radical contributions that may enable the emergence of psychoanalysis' full potential.

Consequently, the paramount impact of psychoanalysis has not been fully explored. This is particularly visible through the scarcity of psychoanalytic studies that explore its epistemic and transdisciplinary special grounding. An illustration of this potential power is that psychoanalysis has had such an impact in scientific and in philosophical spheres, that almost every philosopher of the twentieth century has felt the need to address it, either by denying it, or by cherishing its kernel contributions to humankind. The inverse has not yet happened. Psychoanalysis has fallen prey to *closed-onto-itself* scientific practices that do not pay homage to its universal and unavoidable contribution, of addressing the following issue: to maximize a human being's capacity to self-reflect.

Psychoanalysis may still be ahead of its time. The challenge is to explore it in such a way that enables the full emergence of its signification power. As has been argued elsewhere (e.g., Nobre, 2010), human structures are civilisation structures. If this broader perspective is overlooked, it is possible to trace examples of situations where humans fall into their own traps, constantly denying life, themselves, and reality.

Denying existence, or self-denial, is a fallacy. It implies the denial of every human being's ability to profit from all that life has to offer, from its full potential, no matter the circumstances. This constitutes the history of humankind, this open journey. The idea of life itself, and of that which the present work aims at illustrating, is the need – and the urgency - to make this journey lighter, softer, pleasant, and more gratifying and rewarding. That is, the idea of living life in full and thus taking it to its limits.

Civilisations are structured by dominant-thinking patterns, as well as by the conflict and paradox that emerges from heterodox and non-dominant perspectives. Western civilisation has been structurally centred on the idea of problem-solving and interpreting life itself as a problem to be solved (Nobre, 2010). Simultaneously, co-existing non-dominant world-visions play a critical role in the process of bringing in new questioning perspectives. This questioning is in itself, a new source of transformation, evolution and development.

Psychoanalysis fits into the paradigm of the non-mainstream, non-dominant thinking of a questioning stance. The best way for psychoanalysis to pay homage to its primordial characteristic of psychoanalytic thinking and its inquiring power, is through its practice. Consequently, psychoanalytic scientific production must be able to illustrate the kernel role of the therapeutic relationship, focusing on the issue and its complexity instead of taking a cause-effect approach.

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Therefore, psychoanalytic scientific production must faithfully show evidence of the argument that the central contribution to human development is linked not only to the breadth of its theoretical knowledge but especially to its practice. The structuring relationship between research, supervision and personal and didactic analysis is a fundamental and mandatory ingredient of the psychoanalytic scientific community. The challenge in proving and providing evidence of the effectiveness of psychoanalytical practice is the enhancement of the symbolic, semiotic and existential dimensions of human life, as it is experienced through the eyes of psychoanalysis (i.e., as it is lived by the pair, patient and analyst).

2. TRAUMA AS A SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

Trauma is a subjective experience. Trauma tells us more about “who” (is experiencing it) than about “what” (is happening in reality). The power of trauma is to reveal the other side of the mirror.

The concept of *trauma* fits into the need to define and circumscribe an event that can then be dealt with as a problem to be solved. However, the signification power of such a concept lies precisely in its ability to capture a movement, a process, and a dynamism, which characterises life per se.

If life is understood as a problem to be solved, then the focus goes towards seeking a solution. This is positive, as there are indeed situations that fit into this problem-solution paradigm. Yet, again, the need to use a term like trauma necessarily implies that there is more to be said about it in terms of holding a wider horizon of interpretation about life itself.

This wider perspective on trauma implies that it holds a whole vision of whatever reality it is trying to grasp. Because of this power to reflect a world view and a specific positioning in terms of how human beings make sense of the world, the term *trauma* is in a privileged “position” to access that which constitutes humans as such.

The arguments to be developed in order to explain a concept such as trauma will reflect a collection of items, which themselves hold the key to the puzzle or enigma. Enigma, in terms of mystery, combines the qualities of opacity and yet, the urge to unveil it and to bring it to the ground. It also represents something that cannot be located, defined, or resolved once and for all; and which cannot have a one-fits-all solution; and as such, it is able to capture something that is continual, something that never ends. Questions that are open to always renewed answers fit into this pattern.

Therefore, this effort to define trauma as an open concept implies that it holds the power to question, to bring into perplexity, to puzzle, and thus, to provoke an inquiring movement. This inquiring movement may be contrasted with a static classification where both the emissary and the receptor, the one who uses the term and the one who is confronted with such statement, fix the term as a technical, objective, problem-solution type of answer.

This “fixing” is an implicit agreement between both parties, and yet, due to the intrinsic and open nature of the concept, it may be broken at any moment. That is, both sides of the equation may suddenly discover that what has been previously said, no longer holds, and that something does not make sense, something is missing, and there is the need to reformulate whatever situation is being considered.

As happens to all open concepts, every time one comes into contact with its formulation, a special moment may emerge, a eureka moment. This is subtle, it is instant and irrefutable, it comes as something that seems automatic, that cannot be refused and that might not be even noticed, unless one makes a specific effort to go back and address what is happening.

It is not an answer, it is not a new formulation, or a new fixed description, but rather, it is a simple gesture. It comes as the need to adjust one’s body to a chair, a light movement that enables a new sitting position, like stretching one’s back or uncrossing one’s leg.

This special moment is a change in perspective, and thus it brings forth that which could not be seen from the previous standpoint. Something new emerges and it opens a tiny, infinitesimal possibility of confronting, denying and questioning that which had been previously accepted as valid.

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This open interpretation process, and the process of denial and of suspicion – is there forever. This is true for both parties, for both sides, for the one who emits the statement and for the one who receives the message. Open concepts are like an active engine, constantly producing new possibilities of interpretation.

In a written text, both the author and the reader may find new interpretations every time they come into contact with the text, as if the words have acquired a life of their own, independent from the initial setting. Creation is a never ending process, so that the written word, once presented as an open concept, enables this constant, rich, complex, and never ending process of constituting new interpretation possibilities, new formulations, elaborations, and arguments that aim at capturing that volatile and turbulent world, in which reality manifests itself.

This is the *hic et nunc*, the *here and now* perspective, the magical moment where new possibilities become accessible, either when the author reads his own text or someone else reads it, or when during a conversation, an oral expression of a statement, the one who emits the statement and the one who hears it, both may grasp it. This cannot be fixed once and for all.

That is, every time there is the need to refer to such statement, to such a previously fixed formulation of an open concept, there is the risk and the possibility of the emergence of something new. This happens because this is constitutive of reality itself, reality as an open movement. If one would take this process to the extreme, humans would become mute, as there would be no possibility to freeze, to pinpoint, to define, or to classify reality. There would be only wonder and puzzlement, almost as a prison, cement, a human turned into a statue, into stone.

Life as movement, reality as movement, and humans as movement, bring us into this dead-end where nothing can be said because it is already gone. This paradox, this conflict, this ambiguity, captures a creative tension that itself may define life, reality, and humans. It is an open movement of perplexity that enables reaching a different standpoint from where new possibilities may emerge. Again, it is not a perfectly defined answer, but rather a subtle repositioning, that prepares the ground for the possibility of novelty to occur.

Consequently, open concepts have this concealing capacity that no one can hold onto indefinitely. One freezes an open concept into a fixed definition which may remain untouched forever if no one ever questions it. But this questioning possibility is intrinsically there, and there is no escape from this risk.

A trauma phenomenon is of this order. It is fixed into a negatively painful pattern, and yet, it holds the possibility for a new pattern to emerge, and for growth to happen.

3. LIFE, REALITY AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

Two sides of this open interpretation process, or interpretation of an open concept, may be taken into account from this point onwards. On one side, there is a link between reality, life and human existence. On the other side, there is the time-space grounding of life's experience.

Reality is the most open concept of all. From an extreme perspective, it is a void term and it is a fruitless process to try to freeze it. Once more, it offers more information about "who" is trying to define it, rather than the term itself.

That is, it is only possible to approach an open concept by making explicit a series of items that enable the construction of an argument, of a script, a narrative, a story and a statement that itself represents a world of meaning, a closed set of assumptions and presumptions that are made explicit by its author, and, that take into account the author's interpretation of its public, its reader, and its interlocutor.

Going back to this inherently impossible process of aiming to fix an open concept, it does reflect the author's effort of constructing an argument, and this construction takes into account its imagined public. It also unavoidably contains an infinite set of contributions that may be represented by schools of thought and their constant and continual production of sets of assumptions, presumptions, arguments and definitions.

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Consequently, the impossible task of defining reality as a once-and-for-all effort makes explicit the contradictions that are present in the experience of defining and freezing and open concept. This happens because the process itself holds a world, a universe of meaning that it is fixed onto a statement.

One may accept such statement for a lifetime and, even so, there is the possibility of the open concept escaping the prison of a definition, when a subtle doubt, an itch, an uncomfortable expectation suddenly emerges. This is the beginning of inquiry, and the possibility of the creation of new worlds of interpretation.

To make it crystal clear, open concepts imply the possibilities of open interpretation. The consequence of this is that the present effort of capturing the open nature of the term *trauma*, involves an exercise of designing sets of assumptions, and of possibilities of interpretation, which involve the author, with his world and universe, with the imagined public's world and universe of meaning, as well as the context within which such meaning may be expressed and such statement may be uttered. The author is considered here as the figurative image of the narrator of a traumatic event, such as a patient that seeks help.

This implies that the use of the term *reality* carries an idea that is unavoidably considered as a whole, because *meaning* itself comes in worlds and in universes of meaning. One cannot take meaning apart into pieces and combine it differently. When one does that, one has to go back, again and again, until a new world of meaning is possible to be presented, constructed, and created.

This is the absurd exercise of freezing an open concept. No matter the absurdity of this possibility, the open nature character of an open concept, must be present at the moment such statement is pronounced. That is, the absurd effort of using an open concept, as may be exemplified with the open concept reality, exposes the impossibility of freezing it eternally, and thus reveals the provisory nature of all definitions. Harder to grasp, precisely because it is presented in such an obvious, pornographically hard-core way, is that the open concept reality must, unavoidably, contain an idea of unity. As has been claimed above, meaning comes in wholes, in worlds, and in universes of meaning. The confrontation with something that seems absurd exists precisely because it may not fit into the previous world of meaning where it once made perfect sense.

4. MEANING COMES IN UNIVERSALS: THE ENIGMA OF THE INQUIRING PROCESS

In a step-by-step process, the interest in discussing a term like trauma is related to the possibility of interpreting it as an open concept, and as such, of unveiling the inherent complexity of reality. Reality, whatever may be said about it, cannot escape the open concept verdict, and therefore, it is the ultimate and primordial example of this futile exercise of aiming at freezing an infinite moving process.

Again, the enigma is solved by identifying the creative tension that systematically produces sense-making statements, and then it is confronted with unexpected possibilities, and this impossibility of avoiding this new interpretation. Interpretation, in a fuzzy and opaque way, itself brings new stages, new possibilities, new answers, again, new frozen statements that will be challenged from one moment to the next.

Meaning comes in worlds and in universes of meaning, and this implies that meaning is itself a set of universals, of statements that unavoidably contain perfect and complete worlds of meaning. That type of "meaning" does not take us very far. But, if one considers meaning as an open process and as a creative engine, then it is possible to argue that meaning itself comes in a step-by-step process of constant "freezing" and "refreezing" of whatever being made explicit, stated, and expressed, and that this process contains its determination and its non-determination, its affirmation, and its denial. This seemingly absurd story is itself the enigma-solving paradigm that captures reality as it may be approached, defined, stated and expressed.

This is not a choice between a meaningful statement and an absurd one. Firstly, it is the confirmation that sense and nonsense are two sides of the same coin. The trick, the solving of the enigma, involves accepting this risk. Secondly, it implies daring to stand the tension of this state of crumbled

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universals. Finally, it means actively seeking ways to permanently feed this radical and original process of inquiring, of questioning, and of doubting, and, from this subtle suspicion, to start, once more, the construction of meaning, of new worlds and of new universes, of entire wholes that may integrate the scattered parts of the blow of previous determinations, assumptions and statements.

This slow, long, circular, repetitive, and fragile process aimed to dismount and unveil the richness of a concept such as trauma, is an illustration of the way out of trauma, of the de-constructing process, and the de-coding of the traumatic part of a particular event. It means re-constructing and re-coding, and this is life at its best.

The presentation of the argument that the signification power of the term trauma lies precisely in its ability to present itself as an open concept and as an infinite process of interpretation – is crucial. This happens because life itself is lived, sensed, and experienced fully in pivotal situations, and in limit-situations, both good and bad. Good and bad are not always obvious, because once again, this is an intrinsically subjective experience. Any traumatic event can be understood and interpreted as an opportunity – not desirable in itself and not intentional – to reframe one’s existence and one’s approach to *how* life is lived.

The affirmation that there is an unquestionable and unavoidable paradox between the need, the urge, and the impetus to make sense of reality, and that this sense-making process cannot happen without the act of enunciation, expressing, presenting, and determining of freezing of what is being understood – is of primordial relevance. This enunciation process plays a paramount role in analysing trauma from an innovative and positive perspective, and thus producing effective and rewarding change. This therapeutic process is an intensively gratifying exercise. When this possibility emerges, no matter how painful it had been for both the patient and the analyst, the course needed to get there makes life possible, and it makes life worth living.

This paradox, of both needing to de-freeze reality and then needing to re-freeze it again, is but one side of the issue. The other side of the paradox lies in the inherently provisory nature of all statements. Consequently, the aim must not be directed at the statement itself, but rather at the mounting exercise of making impossible pieces fit together in a coherent pattern.

From these statements comes the following conclusion. Conclusions, per definition, cannot be present in the assumptions but in the articulation of the exposition. What has been presented is an impossible task. It is a moment of perplexity and of impasse – because it may only be solved subjectively and intersubjectively.

This is the analytic process at its best. This impasse is solved with the analyst and with life as a whole, with life as it is lived. The analytic process, the talking cure, happens neither in the patients head nor in the analyst’s head. The couch is life itself. The roles of early caretakers are critical in psychoanalysis. Yet, psychoanalysis also radically and originally claims that, throughout life, one never knows who our mothers and fathers are, because there is a sequence of them, and many situations become life-givers.

Psychoanalysis is both radical and original. The term *radical* comes from the *roots*, and the *original* – from the *origins*. And this is precisely the reason why psychoanalysis addresses the universal experience of human existence, stretching this possibility to its limits, highlighting its intrinsically potentially rewarding nature. That is, accepting the risk of living a rewarding existence, of living life to the fullest. This is not as hard as it seems because once we accept *trauma* as an open concept and *reality* as the paradigmatic example of an open concept, then it is just a question of maintaining and holding the creative tension, the inquiring quest, firm enough and long enough, and creating new patterns, new structures, and new modes of existence.

5. EXISTENTIAL EXPERIENCES AND SYMBOLIC REASONING

Trauma has been presented as an open concept. Reality has been presented as the most open of open concepts. Life becomes the second on the list of extreme examples of open concepts. This happens because life may be defined in objective and technical terms as a biological process. And, for “biological” life to exist, the existence of non-organic and non-biological reality has to be inherently

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assumed. As such, when one refers to *life*, one has to implicitly consider both sides of the equation, the biological and the non-biological worlds.

As has been claimed above, thought and meaning are only possible in terms of universals, of worlds and of universes of thought and of meaning. What is critical here is the moving and plastic nature of whatever is assumed to be an open concept. The solving of the enigma is possible when infinite sets of assumptions are agreed upon as being valid as a standpoint for new elaborations, that is, for the integration and articulation of new meaningful inputs. Symbolic reasoning is precisely this process. A symbol is constituted in such a way as that its interpreting power never ceases to unfold. Once frozen, it becomes a sign, an “agreed upon” interpretation, like a technical term.

Water understood as H₂O is not exactly and precisely the same as water that is understood as the source of life. This is not a poetic or literary difference, but an example of how the common use of language unavoidably contains ever vaster and vaster worlds of meaning, larger and larger universes of possibility, and infinite processes of interpretation.

The enunciation of the term H₂O implies a living experience and a direct contact with reality that includes not only the enunciator and the receptor of the message, but more importantly, the whole infinite process of the elaboration of meaning, which includes all existence, because again, the enunciation of a meaningful statement, may only come about as a whole, as a unity. If not, this statement, could not be even thought, enunciated, articulated, let alone communicated or formalised.

Paradox is a key component of the sense-making process, because it enables breaking the varnish of forgotten assumptions, which are no longer valid, if one wants to integrate new material, new possibilities, which do not rely onto the closed universal wholes that enabled its previous enunciation.

The confrontation of H₂O as a source of life incarcerates, embodies, and illustrates the subtle and pernicious acting of the paradox phenomena. One needs both ends of the equation, the geometric and universal language of mathematics, the seemingly reductive formal and the explicit definition of a universal and quotidian life experience, and also the enunciation of that loose and imperfect end, the metaphorical process that may link impossible links. Once it is enunciated, it cannot be denied. If it was possible to be enunciated, it is already present, and there to be seen, heard, integrated or ignored, but it can never be erased or brought back to a non-existence state.

Paradox and unity are then key terms for the understanding of the volatile and turbulent movement of sense making. Unity, a universal, and a whole – is a tyranny, as it is a singular and individual experience. If millions of individuals agree upon themselves of the validity of a certain enunciation, it does not make such enunciation less of a tyranny or of a barbaric act. It remains an individual and singular act. This implies that the spectrum of meaning-making does not go from singular to collective or from individual to shared experience. It is a pure paradox, because it may only be experienced individually, personally, and yet the meaning-making process that enables the formulation and the identification of whatever event, necessarily implies learning and shared, collective, experience. Sharing of those assumptions, in turn, hold, support, and sustain collective interpretations of purely individual and singular events.

In radical terms, there is nothing more universal than an original individual experience. This happens because the more one deepens each singular experience, the more it stretches the general possibility of its replication. Therefore, the argument of understanding trauma as an open concept (which can be illustrated by using terms of *reality* or *life*) needs to be sustained by elaborations around trauma’s paradox and unity. Such an elaborate process may not be understood as an individual *versus* collective experience, but rather as a spectrum that is represented by the extremes of unity and diversity. And now, a new jump is possible, namely, a movement from the denial of the importance of the individual/collective duality to the denial of the universal/diversification polarity.

In a step-by-step approach, one aims at identifying key ambiguities or sources of paradox, and from these extremes bringing in new perspectives of thought and meaning. The next step emerges from the possibility of joining the previously polarised extremes and from confronting them with yet another new and unifying insight.

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The development of marginal analysis has enabled the verification of the following hypothesis. Mathematical reasoning is relevant not just to illustrate ideas such as linear and non-linear relationships and multiple relationship factors and dimensions.

Even when one is not able to identify relationships between variables, which enable the estimation of stable relationships, all that exists is the possibility of analysing infinitesimal changes, the minimal impact of one variable upon another variable; and then there are key lessons to be learnt. To clarify, it does not matter if the whole relationship cannot be figured out, as long as it is possible to gradually map minimum changes around a given point. This holds for the reasoning around paradox of unity and diversity, which is explained above, because it captures the essence of this type of phenomenon.

Once the search for dualities that may be considered as being part of a single whole, like considering meaning-making as being represented within a spectrum that is created by the tension between two extremes, such as an individual *versus* a collective dimension, then, instead of polarising the extremes, one can consider them as being confronted to yet another perspective, another dimension, another spectrum.

This design (or this formatting and configuration) of the polarization in a spectrum may enable strong developments. But, once there is the possibility of identifying yet another unity – one that is able to support and allow both, the first dualism and another idea of unity, which integrates the first dual elements as being one end of another spectrum and which also enables new insights and new changes of perspective, – then the secret is captured, the enigma is solved, not as bricks that just cumulatively form a wall, but as a cocktail mixture where the initial liquids cannot be removed or separated one from the other.

Unity is not confronted to diversity: it forms a single and complex whole. Same as the individual meaning-making processes and the collective meaning-making processes are not to be contrasted, as they form a single whole. Paradox is not to be confronted with coherence, consistency, and stability, but they all form a single whole. And life, reality, and trauma may be explained from any possible starting perspective, because no matter which extreme, polarity or duality one starts with, there is no avoidance of complexity. A drop of water contains the pattern of the whole ocean.

6. TIME AND SPACE DIMENSIONS AND LEGO CONSTRUCTIONS

If one takes into account relativity theory and quantic physics, one may move from nano to macro, and to cosmic dimensions, in terms of scale, and from material to energy and vice-versa. But keeping the attention on everyday life, on life as it is lived, the experience of the world, the experience of existence, is time and space bound. It is a bodily and embodied experience. But through memory, imagination, phantasy, dreams, delirium or hallucination, one may experience a non-time and space bound reality. This statement is counter intuitive, again, because of its hard-core nature: it makes explicit something so immediately obvious and constantly present, that it comes as a shock. Once again, this is the subtle issue that is not commonly considered, precisely because of its ubiquity. That is, it corresponds to something that is permanently there and that is spontaneous in everyday life.

Imagine that someone is referring to a present event and that there is the proposition of an alternative perspective, insight, or point of view. This novelty comes as a surprise and as something apparently impossible to be explained in terms of why it had not been considered before. This exemplifies the capturing of another liquid, another subtle aroma, in the cocktail mix of meaning-making, in the art of cocktail mixing. Again, this process may stop there, or it may be prolonged and replicated. The key issue here is to capture the idea of the process. Process is defined as movement, as dynamism, and as the unfolding and manifestation, or expression, of reality.

Now, instead of someone referring to a present event, one refers to a past one. If new insights can be deciphered, then past reality is not just fleeting, it is open to change. This is not a magical trick but the pure and straightforward use of words and the functioning of language.

Sense making is like a Lego game. One may use a single Lego piece, two, three, or more. There is permanently the idea of unity that quiets down the search for new possibilities of interpretation, and simultaneously, there is constantly the possibility for such questioning and suspicion to emerge.

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One creates, i.e. produces and fabricates, meaning through this connecting and disconnecting of Lego pieces, using different arrangements and combinations. One considers life as it is experienced as being able to be traced according to time dimensions such as past, present and future. However, this is misleading. It is not wrong in the sense that Newtonian physics are not wrong when compared to quantum physics, but rather there is a change of register, a new world of meaning, and a new universe of possibilities.

From this perspective, there is no distinction of past, present and future, but rather the experience of pure present, of the immediate reality, the here and now, *hic et nunc*, given moment. When this happens, it is the process itself that is being captured, and this process is experienced as a new whole, a new possibility.

7. CREATIVITY AND MEANING-MAKING

The possibility of entering into a meaning-making, creative, and life stretching process, is directly related to the lessons learnt in limit-situations, both positive and negative, as limit situations imply that each individual is already doing its best to overcome its own limits, to profit from its own capabilities and to overcome its own blockages. Trusting leads to risk taking and to playing with impossible formulations, new ways out of what previously seemed to be dead ends. Fear leads to the lack of a capacity to react, to reformulate and to re-programme ways of being, of behaving, of functioning and of making sense of reality.

This trust *versus* fear perspective is both an active and a passive mode of being. Whilst our actions and reactions are often possible to identify, to pin-down, and to be made visible, explicit and formal, our passive role is subtle, and as such, it is decisive. Implicit, subtle and invisible processes are far harder to be acknowledged, recognised and valued than explicit ones. Yet nothing that becomes explicit may come to life on its own, that is, that which is visible, formal and explicit must necessarily emerge from that which is invisible, informal and implicit.

The reason why the passive side of human existence is more important than the active one is due to the natural inclination to dismiss it as non-existent. This passivity is the category that corresponds to the possibility of being impressed, of being affected, and of being marked by something. It is not important if this something is internal or external, or if it is an individual or collective movement, process, and dynamism. What counts here is the possibility of taking into account something that is revealing in itself, that enables the emergence of novelty, and that is profiting from a process which is self-fuelling, *auto-poietic*, and self-organising, as in a virtuous circle.

Like the infinite skins of an onion, each complex situation holds on itself an inner capacity to unfold indefinitely as meaning calls for further meaning in a never-ending process. In contrast, vicious circle patterns function as a snowball effect in which there is constantly a recurrent process that kills the possibility of considering new solutions.

This vicious circle entropy is a perfect example of a negative active functioning, based on fear and thus creating self-sustaining blockages. More importantly, fear, deep fear, becomes a recurrent pattern simultaneously as the capacity to be impacted from novelty ceases to grow. No learning and thus no life is possible. Life is lived as pure misery.

The more flexible, open and elastic the modes of functioning, the more effective the passivity role, precisely because passivity is the capacity to be impressed, confronted, marked, moulded and formatted, re-formatted, over and over again, by the emergence of dynamic processes, opening movements and by the process itself through which reality manifests itself. This is the lesson of serendipity.

There is a choice, in terms of a starting position and in terms of a *click*, which is subtle, almost undetectable. This may lead one to choose between the unknown risks and the straightforward and visible patterns of expected development. There is a choice – between endurance, resilience, and the capacity to integrate frustration on one side, and on the other – the ability to maintain a subtle and almost invisible opening to novelty. This choice resonates from routine like patterns of behavior rather than from visible and seemingly critical crossroads. The more important the crossroad, the

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more likely that one's defence mechanisms and locked-in effects begin to play out. This implies that creating self-fuelling mechanisms is more like training for a marathon versus sprint training. It is the automatism and reflexive actions that need to be trained and exercised, and not the consciously visible formal choices. This is possible by recognising and valuing the "passive" structures and modes of functioning, while also relaxing in relation to the "active" decision-making.

This is a consequence of the self-immunity system that may become programmed against itself, feeding on its own toxins. Passivity can be seen as having the most important functioning role, as it enables openness to novelty via a fruitful and self-sustained process; and the "active" function might be misleading, as it may give the impression of both command and control, while it might merely reinforce the hidden blockages.

These patterns of behavior, these ways of functioning, these ways of coexistence of that which seems routine and familiar and that which seems accidental and weird, once again, are not individual or collective, nor internal or external, choices. These patterns are embodied in social practices, which in turn, constitute communities, societies and civilisations.

8. LIFE AS MOVEMENT AND CHANGE

If trauma is a process that holds the capacity to represent an infinite set of inputs, impressions and behaviors; that is, if trauma is to be considered a complex and open concept, then, considering trauma in a clinical setting, it is necessary to distinguish between health and pathology, between equilibrium and disequilibrium, and between rigid, static, and inert ways of being and flexible, dynamic, and living existences.

From what has been said above, and when interpreting life as a journey equipped with self-survival tools, there is a subtle issue to be deciphered. As A. Maslow said once, "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." In the same manner, our time-bound existence eludes us into arranging our life stories and the life lessons in a chronological pattern of past, present and future. This is misleading because it diverts our attention from one of the essential parts of life, the capacity to remain open to novelty, to life's dynamism, and to flowing movements – in every individual and in every circumstance

In a *here and now* perspective, all that counts is the capacity to be open to new meanings, new learning, and new construction. This inherently implies deconstructing meaning, un-learning, and reconstructing signification processes.

Therefore, health and non-health are not two ends of a pendulum effect. There is no objective line between non-pathology and pathology. One possible way to explain this is by stating that from a *here and now* perspective, everything that has happened since the origins of humankind is already the reality's best possible result. That is, looking back, a maximum potential is already being manifested and unfolded into existence. Simultaneously, as we experience our *here and now* existence, when looking forward, nothing is closed, determined or lost, and all possibilities remain open. Perfection is an act of openness, a call for unfolding and for questioning. Perfection may be confronted with perfectionism, which may be described as a vice and as a dead end approach to reality. Perfectionism, guilt, culpability, fear and self-denial are life-denying mechanisms; they are misconceptions of what life is and of what a human being's existence signifies.

If we consider that both individual's and civilisation's existences may hold on to more positive and gratifying and to more negative and pernicious modes of functioning, we can apply this to understanding of health in general and of mental health in particular. Human existence represents an open process, where there is a common pattern from the cave ages to the post-humanist future. This open process crosses immemorial ages and, simultaneously, it is present within each individual life and each individual situation. Again and again, there is fear and closeness onto itself *versus* confidence and trust, and the ability to integrate, to acknowledge, and to value novelty. What is true for individuals is true for the human species. Life comes in patterns and these are needed in order to create routines and to save energy. More importantly, they also must be constantly revised, dismissed, substituted, reformulated and updated.

9. TRAUMA AS WORK-IN-PROGRESS

Trauma is pathological and health menacing because it represents an unfinished business, an unresolved task and a viciously repetitive pattern and system. Humans need the term trauma in order to pinpoint diffuse patterns that become encoded into the modes of existence of individuals and of collections of individuals, such as societies and civilisations. The inverse relation of its degree of visibility defines the severity of trauma. The more hidden, subtle, and apparently obvious, natural and common a situation may be, the more its degree of traumatic effect may be felt. This happens because that which becomes immediately visible also immediately triggers defence and protecting mechanisms. Trauma, being a subjective experience, cannot be linearly tied to direct extrapolations; and though it may be expected that aggressive, violent, and threatening situations may be more damaging than those with less visibility, the inverse can be true.

Trauma, as all clinical symptoms, represents something more than itself. And this “something” is more connected to life as a whole, as a diverse unity, and as an open process.

From a *here and now* perspective, a life-long trauma may cease to exist from the moment onwards, if it becomes possible to process it and to reformulate it. This means to frame it and to enunciate it in such a way that it articulates with present resources, capabilities, and modes of existence. From this moment onwards, trauma becomes an opportunity for growth and for development, as it enables an opening to manifestation of reality and its full potential. This is human existence at its best.

10. DECONSTRUCTING CIVILISATION

Certain key concepts help build the block that may explain the present state of affairs regarding the potentially pathological nature of trauma from a less conventional perspective.

The first concept is the relationship between dominant and non-dominant thinking. The argument is that Western civilisation has evolved from the creative tension of the inner conflict – between a conventional mentality on one hand, and the contesting perspectives that gradually deny the validity of mainstream thought, on the other. The conventional approach within each epoch is the one that has served well in the past and that resists adaptation and change. As reality becomes more and more distanced from this conventional view, the less conventional perspectives gain strength and gradually replace the main view. In turn, these new views from the periphery become themselves the mainstream, and the cycle continues.

The second concept is that institutions are a central unity for the perpetuation of this cycle, merely because the creative and the destroying forces emerge both within and between institutions. That is, *within* each single institution, the tensions between mainstream and non-mainstream thinking are replicated, and there is a succession of stability and dominance of a certain approach by the contestation and then by the change to the new approaches. But this process may occur also in the relationships *between* institutions, where those that represent more stable and conventional perspectives are challenged by the ones representing alternative views, forcing the former ones to either change or perish.

The third concept is that reality is constantly manifesting itself. This manifestation process is an endless flow, which itself constitutes a form of rationality, of intelligibility.

The fourth concept alters the logic of the above mentioned succession of stable and turbulent stages, adding that besides this specific pattern, there are certain founding dilemmas that have a defining role of the civilisation itself. That is, they have managed to keep the civilisation together as an open unity. Therefore, the pattern is repeated across different epochs, in a continuous cycle and, in parallel, specific issues remain central, unique, and characterising the civilisation, within which the different epochs are succeeding.

Looking at these four concepts, one can draw the following arguments.

First, Western civilisation has had its birth in the Ancient world, both Greek and Roman.

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Second, the Greek brought the vision of the *world* as it is still referred to today. It implies the broad conception and interpretation of reality, which constitutes an unified whole, even if several versions or visions of it may co-exist at the same time.

Third, the Romans systematised, operationalised, and disseminated a certain Greek vision of the world, while creating a legal and institutional structure to support it.

Fourth, a defining characteristic of Western civilisation is the dilemma between two possible perspectives, as it was developed in Greek times. One is the conviction that the human being's environment is intrinsically hostile and that reality is inherently negative, deficient, and must be corrected by constant human efforts and interventions. In this vision, human knowledge is the key to success (as it relates to Gnosticism). And, reality itself may be divided into 'bad' and 'good' categories, as proposed in Manichaeism: the "bad," the unknown, the uncontrolled, and the unpredictable (i.e. un-intervened reality); and the "good," or the aspects that may be addressed and dealt with through human intervention. The opposing perspective, known from pre-Socratic times, has a positive view of reality and of its uncontrollable features, thus promoting a constant openness and willingness to absorb unexpected developments, and to learn from them.

Fifth, translated in present language and in epistemic terms (though both these views have been present across different ages, and the tension between them characterises Western civilisation), the first one is tended to be connected to each epoch's dominant thinking; but it is out of the second perspective that novelty has come to life. Moreover, the first perspective is anthropocentric and reduces reality to a fixed model, predefined and rigid, whilst the second has a vision of the cosmos as a unity, and it interprets human existence as a part of that whole. Once the first perspective became connected to dominant thinking, it was the one highlighted and promoted since by the Romans. Therefore the formal, visible, explicit and naturalized perspective of modern Western civilisation is that of a human constructed model, through which reality may be captured and, tentatively, controlled. But, the fact that the second option became invisible and present in informal and or hidden terms, it does not make it a less defining feature of Western civilisation. Quite the contrary, it is precisely this less obvious and less naturalized vision that is the one which is better able to interpret, to respond to, and to address the complexity of constantly changing reality.

Sixth, the 21st century globalised world is no longer the home of an imperialist European intervention, as it has been since the Discoveries times to the colonial powers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, the European roots of the Western civilisation have become present in a global way, in a dialogue or else in an open conflict with other prevailing civilisations, mutually influencing one other. Yet, the early tension between two opposed world visions at the root of Western civilisation continues to be a crucial interpretation reading map of both present and past crises. That is, if there is one single, monolithic, perspective that reduces reality to its own *model* of reality, then the only way this perspective may continue to prevail is through the use of force and power, and the destruction of alternative and threatening perspectives. However, once alternative perspectives do manage to survive and to gradually gain influence, then these will succeed by being open to reality's changing challenges and continuously absorbing and integrating reality's intelligibility.

Seventh, these dilemmas, conflicts, and creative tensions are recognisable across different levels of society and are particularly relevant within economic, political and scientific spheres of action. The social dimension, the social impact, of the crisis is left out, not because there is no social influence or pressure, but for the simple reasons of highlighting the fact that the social consequences represent just the tip of the iceberg.

11. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS AND KEY INSIGHTS

As has been argued above, civilisation frames us. This obvious assumption is easily forgotten, in particular within the practices and language use that constitute everyday life. In a clinical setting, life has to recover its ticking movement and its dynamism. Certain crucial insights enable us to fit loose pieces together in a signifying and, more importantly, in a possibly communicative way.

(i) The relationship to the unknown is that which radically defines, characterises, and determines that which will succeed afterwards. This unknown is not just natural cataclysms, the fear of death or other

forms of obvious threats. More importantly, it is the hidden and less evident unknown; in particular the unknown in others, and, worse, in oneself.

(ii) The Ancient world, in particular the Romans, privileged the side of individual human beings related to unity and identity, and they ignored and neglected the side related to multiplicity and ambiguity. This happened for purely strategic reasons: no institutional and legal system could survive without a clear set of unambiguous rules, to be able to punish its individual members, forcibly, if necessary, imposing its law.

(iii) We have seen that it was the *radical* (or fundamental) fear of the unknown that has triggered the need to predict, and consequently, to control. All Greek efforts were directed to these objectives. The word “radical” comes from Latin “root” or “origin,” and “radical” means “extreme, especially as regards change from accepted or traditional forms” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/radical>).

(iv) Yet, the non-mainstream Greek thought started from a different premise, one that maintained that first, the Cosmos is intelligible, and second, that the human being’s intelligibility emerges from it being a part of that diversified unity, that reality, the Cosmos.

(v) Anthropocentrism, which places human beings at the centre of the universe, is usually interpreted as having emerged out of modern secularisation movement. Nietzsche, the first post-modern thinker who inherited three generations of puritan tradition, declared the death of God... Also, it worth to point out that while all religions – from the ancient to the modern ones – were Theo-centric, they allowed the assumption that the human beings are the divinities’ earthly representatives.

(vi) The two sides of Greek thinking, the dominant, obsessed with prediction, and the non-dominant, open and inquisitive, interpreted their deities accordingly; the former fascinated by crime and punishment narratives, and the later intrigued by the mystery of creation, of existence, of nature, of the cosmos.

(vii) Religious thought, spirituality, and symbolic reasoning, together with the development and use of language and the participation in social practices, constituted kernel elements in the early development of the human species. Aristotle’s “rational animal” emerged out of these earlier and millenary experiences.

(viii) The religions of the book, the monotheist movements of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which developed in geographically proximal areas and which provided the origin of several millenary civilisations (including the Western one), share this same dichotomy. That is, there is this constant tension between the need to formalise, define, register, legalise – in contrast with the creative drive to innovate and to challenge preconceived ideas. The religions of the book are therefore the religions of the written law. But, that which is written may have many interpretations, and certain factions may interpret written law in a literary form, closing and restricting its meaning, whilst other factions will take the opposite direction, continuously reading and redefining the new meanings of the ancient texts. This later form is the one that gives birth to revolutions or to gradual, integrative, and subtle change, depending on the resistance that it faces, the greater the oppression, the stronger the reaction.

(xix) The fear of the unknown is related to the vision of the world as being divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’: the ‘good’ being clear and proximal (and known), and the ‘bad’ being alien and distanced (and unknown). That is why, despite the unknown in not necessarily bad, negative, or menacing, the fear of the unknown leads to one’s need to predict and control. However, the attitude of positive confidence in the unknown is quite different. It is not a denial that good and bad exist as human *values*, but rather that reality is infinitely complex, and that this complexity is itself both intelligible and a source of intelligibility. In this complexity, the worst may become the best, and the best, the worst. That is, idealised images of goodness may be corrupted by closer inspection and diabolised; and tragic images of evilness may be transfigured by the development of other interpretations, other developments of reality itself.

(x) Attribution of value is a key; and this attribution is inherently an affective process. It has a value that leads to positive affects, to feelings of belonging, and of wholeness. Affects are a sophisticated version of biological evolution. The formation of crystals or the orbits of the moons form part of this

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organised reality, even if there is no life, no biological processes involved. Affects are this ultimate development of reality's manifestation of its full potential.

(xi) Affects lead to values, and values lead to openness to complexity, openness to new interpretations, and to curiosity, creativity, and ingenuity. If religious thought is understood as one of the earliest manifestations of rationality and of the early development of the human species, then the question to be asked is the following: is the unknown to be feared or to be trusted? These are the dilemmas that have determined both the crises and their overcoming, throughout the development of Western civilisation.

(xii) The need to predict and control, and the distrust for the unknown, lead to the creation of rules, models, rigid and formalised knowledge. Reality is itself interpreted through these models, these reading lenses. Those parts of reality which do not fit the picture may be ignored. And those parts which may question or contradict the fixed model are denied and openly opposed. The confidence in the unknown, the openness to complexity, and the development of the inquiring capacity, may result in a different kind of knowledge, and of a different kind of model of reality. In this version the models are a tool, and they are provisory knowledge, to be used and reinvented as reality imposes its rhythm.

12. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The present paper addresses the issue of how civilisation imprints and how new interpretations of such imprints may enable new perspectives to emerge. In the sphere of policy making, in particular within mental health contexts, scientific communities play a fundamental role. This work represents a call for action. It calls for innovative and empowering practices within clinical settings, framed by solid psychoanalytically grounded approaches.

Consequently, this text is pointing to new directions, in its search for new interpretations of the present state of the scientific and philosophical standing of mental health practices in general and of psychoanalysis in particular. It has been argued above that clinical practices are the result of larger and more complex movements, which in themselves reflect the intrinsic dilemmas of Western civilisation.

These dilemmas are not errors or deficiencies of well-oiled machinery, but rather an expression of the complexity of reality. This same process may occur within an institution or even within an individual human being. That is, this scalability between civilization and singular individuals indicates that reality manifests itself in a process, a movement, a dynamism that affects its participants, whatever the scale. This reality, or rather, this process through which reality manifests itself, is both internal and external, collective and singular, unified and diversified.

Central to the rationale of the present text is the relationship between theory and practice, and between science and technology. Are these dualities autonomous, linearly and cause-effect related, with a preponderance of theory and science over practice and technology? Or are they intrinsically and necessarily related, mutually influencing one another? There is a possible parallelism between the phenomena addressed above, dealing with the tension between two foundational perspectives of the Western world, the urge to predict and control versus openness to the unexpected aspects of reality, and the confrontation of these dualities. The issue is that both science and theory tend to privilege abstract knowledge, intellectual generalisations, and rigid models, whilst practice and technology benefit from the direct contact of material, bodily and temporal reality, the *here and now* world of daily life, and therefore are fostered and nurtured by such direct contact. From this direct contact, from knowledge learnt from practice, from technology that brings in new solutions, pointing new directions, and posing new questions, the true development emerges. Consequently, new theories and new sciences are revealed, manifested and brought to life.

Lessons learnt: the Western world is a captive of an intellectual, abstraction, bias. We hear but do not listen; we watch but do not see. The urge to predict and control, the obsession for perfect models and the myopic reduction of the subtleties of reality, the ones that are able to show its complexity, have become, once again, the mainstream practice and thought. This threat is severe, and its consequences are long lasting. Over the course of its history from Antiquity, since 500 BC (and not from the *roots*, which may be traced back to 9000 BC), successive crises have developed out of the conflict of rigid

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models, which had brought success and positive results to past problems, but which had shown catastrophic performance in dealing with new problems. No alignment, no learning, no adaptation or transformation is possible and the crisis is assured. However, again, this is merely the tip of the iceberg, the answers are already there, already at work, already present, non-intentionally hidden, invisible, and becoming gradually more visible, more present, necessary and obvious.

The periphery and the center are in conflict, and gradually, their positions and roles are inverted. Theories and models, abstract knowledge and intellectual elaborations, science and conceptualisations, as well as all forms of human cognitive activity are essential and are positive. The issue here is the role they take, the power they absorb, and the position they acquire in relation to their antidote, that is, how these theories are themselves recreated and reinvented. More importantly, what does this reveal about how human beings regard themselves; what is their anthropology? Humans understood as being a part of reality, as affecting and being affected by such reality, as being the products and the producers of both, their internal and external realities. This is what unleashes human creative power, ingenuity, and talent. Questioning and the search for new answers is at the root of scientific thinking, yet science, once established and institutionalised, is threatened to lose this drive for innovation. So do individuals, and so does the society.

CONCLUSION

Trauma is a powerful tool. Tool making implies experience in using the tool. Within the process of deconstructing how clinical practices are framed by scientific settings, which in turn depend on policy-making options framed by civilisation imprints, the issue is not only to assume, to identify, and to trace such imprints, but rather to re-create them. New and innovative mental health practices and structures may be designed, once these links of the whole mental health assembly line are taken into account. This is the kernel idea: “doctor, doctor, take your own medicine.” And Freud and his tradition are the masters of this artisan work.

Trauma interrupts the flow of life. Life is something that one goes through, and this experience of existence is a flow of energy, dynamism, and movement. If trauma is to capture and to retain its signification power, it must feed this movement of inquiry, this search for answers that are reformulated every time one uses the term trauma in order to refer to a particular situation.

The Stone Age did not end because we have run out of stones. The role of the analyst is to prove that a stone may become a fundamental tool for empowering effective meaning-making processes. Thus the role of psychoanalytic scientific communities is to create the conditions for such development and to empower the analysts, who in turn can empower their patients. This represents the emergence of life, a new life manifesting in its full unleashed potential.

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