

## **Corporeity, Empirical Research and Clinical Dialogue: Three Approaches for Renewal in Psychoanalysis**

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*Ricerca Psicoanalitica* is an open space for reflection, and welcomes all those who wish to renew and expose psychoanalytic thinking to data which comes from clinical experience and empirical research, and which, starting from clear epistemological repositioning, aims specifically to integrate subjectivity with interpersonal relationships within psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice. This number is a case in point offering the reader three very promising lines of thought for psychoanalytic reflection today.

The first focus, which we have called ‘*Corporeity and Psychoanalytic Practice*’, presents three articles that propose a decisive shift of the *talking cure* from the word to the body. It highlights the intrinsic embodied nature of mental functioning as it manifests itself and is experienced in the consulting room. Marina Amore (2021) and Wilma Bucci (2021b) take an interesting and detailed clinical case and propose a real paradigm shift in conceiving the mind as a set of multiple ways of processing experience, verbal and non-verbal, including sensory and somatic experiences. Consequently, psychoanalytic technique may shift to the point of considering that the body of the analyst is a probe capable of intercepting and exploring, among other things, the non-verbal signals of the patient’s experience and suffering. By doing so, analysis can reactivate that natural integrative process of the mind that, in multiple code theory (Bucci, 1997, 2021a) is called the referential process. Thus, an updated perspective coherent with the new neuro-scientific evidence emerges, which does not betray the essence of the psychoanalytic process, on the contrary, if anything, it extends, broadens and strengthens it. In conclusion, the article by Jon Sletvold and Doris Brothers (2021) interprets this embodiment of the mind in the us-them dynamic that is at the basis of the fascist experience - the term ‘fascist’ here refers not

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only to the political and historical experience of fascism and nazism, but any identity experience that sets ‘us’ against ‘them’ and which occurs primarily on an emotional and embodied basis. This article, too, takes two interesting current clinical cases concerning patients who openly support a leader with fascist and populist tendencies; the description and interpretation of the non-verbal emotional dynamic which emerges in the clinical dialogue with these two patients not only helps to concretize once again the primarily embodied dynamic of our mind, but warns us that each one of us, in particular situations, could slip into rigid identity-related acts in everyday life, and with our patients. And we can only agree with the authors when they affirm that psychoanalysis, as a theory and as a clinical technique, is a powerful means of combating the ‘trivialization’ of the fascist experience in today’s context.

The second focus of the issue is ‘*Psychoanalysis and Research*’. For many psychoanalysts this has been, and still is, an irreconcilable oxymoron (e.g., Hoffman, 2009), whereas, from clear epistemological repositioning (e.g., Negri *et al.*, 2019) that redefines in complex terms the question of scientific knowledge we can derive a type of psychoanalysis able to approach empirical research data not with a sense of being under attack or distorted, but, on the contrary, as an opening into new perspectives and possibilities. Thus, in the first article, Gianluca Lo Coco (2021), after summarizing data from evidence-based research that confirm the effectiveness of psychodynamic treatment, proposes to integrate this ‘*one-way*’ or ‘*top-down*’ approach to research with one more consistent with clinical experience, defined as *practice-based research*. This second approach studies therapeutic change not by isolating the variables or reducing the complexity of the factors involved, but by accepting the challenge of studying the complexity of the therapeutic relationship as it unfolds and in its natural daily context. The second article of the focus, by Emilio Fava (2021), also proposes specific reflections and concrete ways to open the field of psychoanalysis, and more generally, psychotherapy, to data from empirical research and vice versa. This openness may in effect lead to surprises and disturb consolidated certainties, but it will certainly enrich those who would like their work to be closer to the actual reality of patients encountered in daily practice.

If the two focuses of the issue just described outline two possibilities for the renewal of psychoanalysis today, the new column, ‘*Dialogues about care*’, inaugurated in this issue, is the rediscovery of a well-known tradition - the favorite of psychoanalysts, starting with Freud. Alessandra Micheloni (2021) brings to our attention a case that well exemplifies the potential of an expanded and revised analytical technique. A technique which no longer focuses only on the verbal and the mental but listens to and interprets the patients’ experience that include the bodily and non-verbal elements as cardinal aspects through which analytic dialogue develops over time, and

thanks to which the awareness of the analytic dyad is raised recursively. It is important to know that the authors do not limit themselves to presenting a case, but engage in conversation with other colleagues who re-interpret it from different points of view. This is not to be underestimated: describing one's own case and discussing it publicly implies a certain amount of expository rigor and humility; it limits the risk of narcissistic self-satisfaction on the part of the analyst, and above all ensures that a subjective vision of the case does not turn into self-referential validation. Adopting this attitude of open, rigorous and genuine confrontation means leaving behind the shallows of both reductionism and absolute relativism, and instead appreciating subjectivity as a source of knowledge to the extent that, thanks to systematic intersubjective dialogue with other subjective points of view, we can go back to considering the data of experience as a guarantee of the plausibility of our clinical hypotheses. This mature open discussion on clinical cases is another formidable way forward for psychoanalytic thought that we have at our disposal in the current cultural and scientific context.

The issue concludes with the usual columns that present reviews of two recent books, the first, by Marco Conci, is about the history of psychoanalysis and some of the most important international psychoanalysts; the second, by Franco Prina, concerns youth gangs. There follows a comment on the psychological dynamic of the *Netflix* television series, 'Ethos', and the issue ends with a presentation of a project entitled *Sum*, an association that promotes educational, clinical and cultural actions based on a properly complex vision of the human being.

Enjoy reading!

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