

MEMORIES AND TRIANGULATION IN INTERPRETATIVE PSYCHOANALYTICAL WORK. II

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Abstract

The paper deals with the relation between procedural memory and declarative memory, from the perspective of the triangulation in psychoanalysis. The patient's explicit reference to his past, even when it procedurally is a defence, it is also, declaratively, a step towards assuming the origin of a certain psychic content. This step would correspond to a "witness": within the framework of the judiciary metaphor, the side in the patient which "declares" the reconstruction of his past "gives witness" about something which can only belong to himself. The author puts into evidences the importance of the active contribution by the patient to the birth of interpretation in the here and now.

The patient's explicit discourse upon his past may constitute itself as a necessary "third" in the differentiation between transference and countertransference, valid for both protagonists of the analytical session. This hypothesis is illustrated by means of a clinical fragment.

Cuvinte-cheie: memorie explicită, diferențiere, triangulare, martor.

Keywords: explicit memory, differentiation, triangulation, witness.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this paper (Orășanu, 2011), we have discussed a clinical fragment of an analysis, followed by a presentation on the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, and the reciprocal relationship between an event and its ulterior (re)signification.

In this section we shall continue our theoretical excursus with a discussion on the asymmetry of the metaphorical analogy space-time, the role of a "third" in constructing the analytical space, and well as on the notion of triangulation in psychoanalytical theory.

2. *NACHTRÄGLICHKEIT* AND THE RETROACTIVE SIGNIFICATION

The metaphorical analogy space-time is asymmetrical for the analyst and for the patient, as regards the patient's past. This means that, when the analyst refers to

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the patient's past, he seems to distance himself from the patient; on the other hand, when the patient refers to his own past, he seems to come closer to himself. The recourse to the past underlines the asymmetry between the two. We can extrapolate and say that the remote past appears to the subject as a possession deeper than the near past. The more memory recover comes nearer and nearer the present time, until even the point of the session, the nearer feels the subject that he comes to the analyst.

When discussing an article by H. Faimberg on *Nachträglichkeit* (2005), I. Sodr  differentiates two types of retroactive signification: long-time-span and short-time-span-*Nachtr glichkeit*, which would send, within the framework of our discussion, also to a difference between child memory recovery and adult memory recovery (Sodr , 2005). She suggests that the LTS-*Nachtr glichkeit* variant presupposes more substantial changes, as it affects the "old" relationships and events, while the STS variant comprises cumulative effects that lead to LTS-*N* (Sodr , 2005). Faimberg's answer to this observation is that a concept of intrapsychic time aiming at a complex and reciprocal temporal dialectic helps us overcome the dilemma of interpretation in the present or of interpretation in the past (Faimberg, 2005).

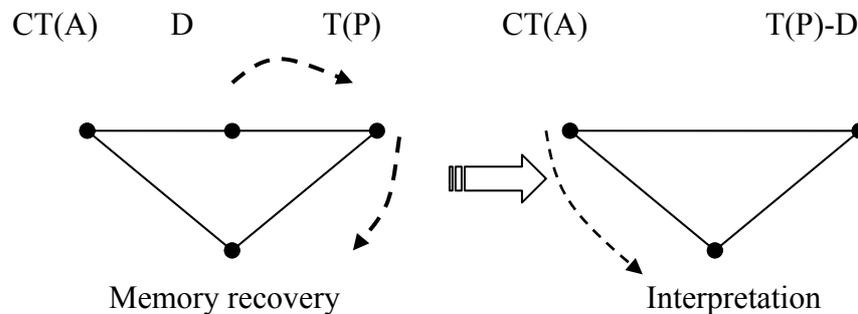
In the context of this article's problematics, I resume this dilemma, in the sense of the differentiation between S1 and S2: John uses the-past-without-analyst by *declaring it as such*, in order to initiate a self-object differentiation and to enable A2 to offer a final interpretation regarding the present-with-analyst, which signifies, by a *nachtr glich* chain, the past S1. Although S1 does not explicitly contain an "old relationship and event", I think we can have in mind an analogy between evocation of childhood memories and evocation of such a memory which, though belonging to an adult's past refers to an adult *undergoing analysis*, therefore, to a setting which presupposes regression and transference. As S2 demonstrates transference from S1, we may consider that the patient approached S1 as being a kind of "childhood" for S2.

We have reached therefore the idea that *John used the evocation of S1 in order to initialize a differentiation self-object regarding his destructiveness, and thus to break the transference-countertransference circularity by means of a triangulation having his past S1 as a third element. This operation is expressed by using the third S1 as a kind of witness to the fact that the respective destructiveness belongs to the subject, not to the object, and not to both.* Here is a possible schematizing of this triangulation:

To begin with, we only have "one single line", like in the description by Britton (1998, p. 41–58):



By means of evocation S1, destructiveness attaches itself to transference:



CT (A) = countertransference (analyst); D = destructiveness; T (P) = transference (patient)

Let me now stop for a short overview of the notion of triangulation in psychoanalytic theory.

3. TRIANGULATION

The idea of a “third” originates in Freud’s reference to the tragedy of King Oedipus, made to illustrate the triangular conflictuality of the subject towards parental objects. This perspective appears for the first time in 1897, in a letter to Fliess. It comes back again in divers clinical texts or essays on sexuality, and in 1924 Freud dedicates a whole metapsychological article to the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1924).

Many authors today consider that the “space” in which we think has got a triangular character. Thus, the very notion of *third* seems to have become co-substantial to psychoanalysis.

W. Bion considers that the linking activity in human thought which bases itself on the coupling of container and its contained has got an oedipal connotation. Thus, an attack on linking between two internal objects represents an attack on the internal parental couple. But the coupling of two internal objects is experienced not only as a source of envy, but also as a basis of inner creativity. Putting experience into thoughts, and thoughts into words, implies repetitive chaining of coupling processes modelled after the physical contact between two parts of the body (Bion, 1962, 1967).

Winnicott talks about the transitional area of experiencing, which constitutes a third form of reality for the individual, alongside external or internal reality. The transitional object makes possible a process which leads the child from pure subjectivity to objectivity and determines him/her to accept notions such as difference and similarity (Winnicott, 1971).

In 1984, T. Ogden introduced the notion of “analytic third” which would designate a third subject, unconsciously co-created by the analyst and the patient,

which seems to have its own life in the interpersonal space between the two, and which has a structuring influence. The author differentiates between this intersubjective third and Lacan's "name of the father", or the potential space described by Winnicott. According to him, the analytic third created by the two subjectivities – that function in an asymmetrical relation – represents the subject of the analysis and, at the same time, instates both analyst and patient in their own statuses (Ogden, 1994).

As a representative of the French school, J. Lacan elaborated a theory of the importance of the third person in the psychic triangle. Within the family, the child confronts itself with the interdiction of incest (meaning, an element other than the child's sexual insufficiency, and other than the castration threat), whose internalization becomes an organizing factor of the psychic life. To favour an internalization of law, parents must show themselves submitted to it, creating the image of a principle (an abstractization) which extends beyond a singular rule (Lacan, 1979).

R. Britton, in his theory on thought in clinical situation, starts from the model of the primal family triangle, in which the child confronts itself with the relationship between his parents that excludes the child in such a way, that it becomes a witness, and not a participant. Thus, a *third position* appears, in which one can observe the object relationship, yet it is also a position which enables the subject to consider that he is himself observed, in turn. Britton called this process a *triangular space* (1998). He also wrote about the situation in which some patients do not tolerate to imagine the primal object as being in relation with a third object. As a consequence, the impression that the analyst communicates with himself with regard to the patient seems catastrophic to the patient (1989, cf. Britton, 1998). This situation of lack of a third position may prevent the analyst from mentally severing himself from the *linear* intersubjective to-and-fro and to realize what happens by a "lateral" movement (1998, p. 42). Such a movement seems unbearable to the patient, until the moment where he himself *initializes* it, thus creating the possibility of a triangular space.

In France, A. Green concerned himself with borderline clinical practice and generally, with the pathology which presupposes self-object differentiation troubles, ante-oedipal anxieties and the introjection lack of a separating third. According to him, the analyst's work represents the introduction of this third element in a dual relationship. This thirdness has to do with language. In 1974, Green showed that, within the analysis, verbalization of experience introduces the potential presence of the father. The interpretation by the analyst introduces a third element in the primitive communication with the patient, which supposedly repeats the one between mother and child. Finally, Green advanced a theory of the *generalized triangulation with a substitutable third* (1990), where the third is a *representance*:

the necessity of the individual to represent for himself his drive in its double relation to the self and to the object. Thirdness would mean the very status of *relation* to an other, third element, outside the ones that it puts into relation.

The same author uses Winnicott's vision according to which the necessary phase in the separation from the primal object and the constitution of individuality would be the phase of *destructiveness*. Green connects this phase, too, to thirdness, a thing necessary to obtaining the feeling of individual integration. He finally realized that, if the unconscious is the domain of the *thing-representation*, different from the *word-representation* (Freud), then his research on the phenomenon of thirdness had to go beyond the sphere of language and approach the sphere of semiotics and pragmatics. Thus, he appealed to the ideas of Peirce (Green, 2005). These I shall present here in a summary, as they appeared in the writings of the French authors who were interested in this topic.

C.S. Peirce (1839–1914), who seems to be the inspirer of Lacan, was an American scientist and philosopher who was mainly concerned with mathematical logics and semiotics, and who laid the grounds of pragmatism. According to him, the thought process consists of a chaining of triads that in turn consist of the following elements: 1. an *object*, 2. a *sign* or *representamen* that substitutes the object, on condition that there is 3. an *interpretant*. The interpretant, in turn, may constitute itself in sign for the same object, with another interpretant, and thus conditions appear for the existence of infinite successive triads. Upon reading Aristotle, Kant and Hegel, Peirce proposed a system formed of three categories of universals: *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness* – characterized by *quality* (for example of a feeling – firstness), *diadic relation* (secondness) and *representance* (thirdness).

From this point of view, the representance concept appears as linked to a third level, the level of thirdness. This opens the way to infinite substitution, therefore to the potential, to the virtual, as A. Green shows, for he very often refers to the notion of potential space in Winnicott (Green, 2005, p. 680). Also, it appears from here that the meaning of a relation appears only as a consequence of interpretation: the *representamen* is the subject of a triadic relation, with its own object for its own interpretant. The interpretant is not a person, but a property of the sign and a result of the interpretive process, like the articulation itself of the first two elements.

Green proposes this perspective as basis for oncoming research in psychoanalysis, especially with regard to possible interpretants in psychic activity. For example, the various systems of signs – *representamen*, amongst which the Freudian (which contains *thing-* and *word-representations*, but also affects) – send to various interpretants. Thus, interpretants which operate in phantasy would be different from the ones in the acting-out process or from the ones in delirium (Green, 2005, p. 681).

Another author, S. Botella, is concerned by the theme of triangulation as unconscious logics and as a possible way to a theory of representation in psychoanalysis. This theory would be necessary to account for the elemental psychic movements, the affective ones, which are prior to representation formation. Following Green, she, too, studied the work of Peirce, for whom life would be a sort of “brutal force”, independent from reason, and therefore belonging to the category of “secondness”. S. Botella draws a parallel between the couple *quality* in “firstness” and *force* in “secondness” on the one hand, and the couple *drive* – *object relation* on the other. From a psychoanalytical point of view, *quality* might refer to the entire psychic reality of sensations, emotions, feelings, affects. In order to show how the three dimensions become articulated, Peirce uses a metaphor from the judiciary: *quality* (firstness) articulates itself on reason (thirdness) by means of a force (secondness) which he calls “sheriff”. Thus, a single third element, “pure law”, would be like a standing judge, but without a sheriff. Brutal force (the effectiveness of the drive) in its turn would correspond to a state of *non-differentiation* between sheriff and criminal, between doer and his deed (Peirce, in Botella, 2005). Finally, for Peirce the mathematician, thirdness – which makes intentionality possible and thus directs us to pragmatics – is the condition of any possibility of combination, therefore lies at the ground of thought and intelligibility. All these are the result of a process which unfolds across *heterogeneous* levels (Botella, 2005).

Upon reviewing the use of the notion of triangulation in psychoanalysis, let me resume the discussion of the relation between memory recover and the premises of enabling interpretation. In connection with this, D. Birksted-Breen (2003, p. 1503) shows that explicit reconstructions or narratives may have defensive purposes, and, on the other hand, the complete loss of the implicit temporal perspective in the analyst’s mind leads to collusion with his patient in the present (Birksted-Breen, 2003, p. 1503). She thus quotes O’Shaughnessy (1992, cf. Birksted-Breen, 2003), who wrote on the analytic impasse, which this latter calls an “enclave”. *What I wish to put into evidence is the importance, for the possibility of the interpretation’s formulation in the here and now, of explicit, declarative and narrative rememoration of the past, and hence the importance of the active contribution by the patient to the birth of interpretation.* As far as the defensive side of rememoration is concerned, with a view to avoid the emotional impact of the present, I think that the question can be solved in the same *nachträglich* manner, that is: if rememoration leads to interpretation *hic et nunc*, it means that it was used in the triangulation type that I describe; and if not, then it means that it was reduced to a simple escape from a relationship experienced as dual, into another dual, des-affected, relation.

Let us come back to the John case (see the presentation in the first part of this paper, published in Rev. Psih. no. 3, 2011). Had A2 intervened immediately after the

rememoration part, the one between the “heavy silence” and the “I mean to say, heavy for me”, by saying: “It sounds as if you frightened A1”, the interpretation would have settled the defensive part of S2. In other words, it is the effect of rememoration upon the analytic process which decides, in a pragmatic manner, a defensive intention or an intention of change, of both protagonists, who can ally themselves in one sense or in the other.

I shall now try to apply the judiciary metaphor of Peirce to the analysis of the John fragment. The “object” or the “quality” would be *destructiveness* brought to the forefront by means of the crushed monster dream (firstness). The *representamen* element itself – which can relate to *transference* or to *countertransference* – (secondness) is not yet a “sign” for destructiveness, i. e., not before the interpretation by A2. This element would correspond to the *transference – countertransference relation* in which there is a non-differentiation concerning the origin of destructiveness (cf. the dream). According to Peirce’s metaphor, the “sheriff” is indistinguishable from the „doer” as long as a third, „the judge” (the law) is absent.

The “interpretant” reference (thirdness) is being triggered by John’s explicit reference to S1. *It is being sanctioned as such by his specification, “heavy for me”, which, even when it procedurally is a defense, it is also, declaratively, a step towards assuming personal destructiveness.* A2’s interpretation finalizes the process of destructiveness attribution: “You say this to me so that I do not become frightened”, a statement which also conveys the meaning: “You did frighten A1”, meaning: “Your destructiveness originates in your own self”. The question may arise here: didn’t we all know this from the very beginning? The answer is: no, because the “law” of the fact that destructiveness originates in John, if we want to preserve the judiciary metaphor, needs, in order to function, the force of the “sheriff”, i. e. the relation transference-countertransference.

The declarative reference to the past would correspond to what I would call a “witness”: within the framework of the mentioned metaphor, the side in John which “declares” S1 “gives witness” about something which can only belong to himself.

Finally, A2’s interpretation contains two more implications, which render it more palatable to the patient. On one side, the suggestion of defensiveness (the “you mean to protect me” in the interpretation) attributes to John a dose of love which is *linked* to destructiveness: it modifies the self-representation of the subject. On the other hand, the fact that A2 expresses a metacognition upon what goes on between them shows to the patient that A2 tolerates his destructiveness. Thus, the interpretation changes the object-representation of the subject.

The whole process was sustained, as I showed, by means of a triangulation which made the Peircean *representamen* become a “sign” for *destructiveness* to the extent to which it attached itself to *transference* as a result of the occurrence of John’s *declaration* about his past.

For a maximal schematization, we can consider, as I have shown in the above graphics, the following form of triangulation: 1. transference, 2. countertransference – where one must discern countertransference as reaction to the patient’s transference from countertransference as transference of the analyst himself – and 3. explicit reference by the subject to the subject’s past. All these three elements have destructiveness as theme, and all three articulate themselves not just in the analyst’s mind, but in the minds of both.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Present experience produced a change (procedurally) by means of the formulation of the problem in terms having *the past* (Sequence 1) as a point of reference.

If we are to interpret the unfolding of these sequences according to the narrative-mythological metaphor, we could say this: before S1, destructiveness was conceived unconsciously in terms of destructivity *versus* vacuum (catastrophe or nothing); whereas in S1, it manages to appear in terms of death *versus* life, it is being reformulated in S2 in terms of anxiety *versus* safety.

The formulation of the problem took place partly in analysis1, partly in analysis 2 (on the basis of the remembering of experience in analysis1). The past-S1 functioned, for the present-S2, as a “witness” or like a *third*. When a reconstitution functions like an affective and cognitive third, it acquires the value of an *objective reality*, even when it may be distorted by the present. The analyst and the patient too, *rely* upon this reconstitution of the past (which is explicit, declarative, formulated in words and images) in order to distinguish transference from countertransference and to attribute to the patient the origin of destructiveness.

In this article’s theoretical exploration I have started from the controversy regarding the therapeutic role of memory recovery. Without claiming to solve the question, I have suggested that *one of the roles of* the explicit reference to the past is the role of a “third”, considered in connection to the dyad transference-countertransference and to the process of interpretation.

Primit în redacție la: 29.IX.2010

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REZUMAT

Lucrarea tratează despre raportul dintre memoria procedurală și memoria declarativă, din perspectiva operației de triangulare în psihanaliză. Referința explicită a pacientului la trecutul său, chiar dacă este o apărare din punct de vedere procedural, constituie, în mod declarativ, și un pas spre asumarea originii unui anumit conținut psihic. Acest pas ar corespunde cu un „martor”: dacă utilizăm metafora judiciară, partea din pacient care „declară” reconstrucția trecutului lui „stă drept mărturie” că un anumit lucru nu poate să-i aparțină decât lui. Autoarea pune în evidență importanța contribuției active a pacientului la formarea interpretării în aici-și-acum. Discursul explicit al pacientului asupra trecutului său poate constitui, în sine, un „terț” necesar în diferențierea dintre transfer și contra-transfer, valid pentru ambii protagoniști ai ședinței de analiză. Această ipoteză este ilustrată cu un fragment clinic.