

Intervista a Matthias Sell

On 20 and 21 September the teachers of SSPIG of Palermo have suspended classes to reflect on some aspects of training. The title of the seminar was: "Group Dynamics in AT: operating strategies and intervention techniques" and the socio-economic conditions in which we are immersed and the each school of psychotherapist is inserted, was the setting for critical and stimulator. The meeting was moderated by Matthias Sell, Teaching Transactional Analyst, Psychoanalyst, Coordinator exams TEW EATA, who comes to SSPIG for the third year.

It was a very significant moment that has amalgamated the group-staff allowing teachers to think about concrete and realistic proposals for students.

We took the opportunity to ask a few questions Matthias Sell.

1. How psychotherapy is involved in the climate of general crisis?

Psychotherapy has to be seen in a wider context and this includes the frame of reference of family, work, profession and overall conditions of the society. Pathology is based on personal development and on the reaction towards the frame of reference society is offering. S. Freud and E. Berne are very aware of these circumstances and both offered a standpoint of view which is critical towards the frame of reference according to the society and they think this is necessary to be able to understand clients and patients reactions. Some society conditions are not healthy and they can force innerpsychodynamic conflicts to become real psychodynamic pathology, so we will find a depressive reaction or burn out. These circumstances may overlap the

healthy part in the patients or clients and the psychotherapist should be able to support the healthy part in the patient while understanding the reaction towards bad society circumstances. This I will call a **neutral position** of the therapist always in awareness of society conditions which includes the awareness of the implication of crisis. Crisis may have very strong impact on the psychic of patients and clients, they may evoke distress and unstable persons may get under innerpsychic stress. This stress may have a dynamic function in the psychic, or a structural function which may support the lag of selfesteem, or may support an epigenetic problem from different developmental steps, or may stress some special family disconnections. All this might be compensated by having a stable and structured workplace and when this stabilisation gets lost, all these inner conflicts may come on the surface and brings the deep inner psychic conflicts to awareness. So the psychotherapist should always be aware of this difference of surface dramatic like lost of workplace and the deep structure of inner psychic conflicts. The treatment should include a “deep” narrative (D. Stern) compared to the surface narrative.

2. What can the psychotherapy do in these times of crisis?

Like it was mentioned before the psychotherapist takes a position towards the patient or client, he/she should make a careful diagnosis together with patient or client, to see carefully the society real conditions and is able to the reality of unhealthy conditions. Then it is necessary to share with the patient or client his/hers reactions towards this conditions. This sharing process helps to support the innerpsychic resources and the resilience power of the patient. Hereby it is

very helpful to understand that the inner resources comes always from important or/and inner objects /introjects which belong back from former times of experiences of good or supporting real relationship. So it is important to find these important persons in this personal history. For example a little girl growing up in a family where mother and father are heavily alcohol addicted find a neighbour lady next door which was given her every morning when she was leaving the house to go to school a very friendly “Good morning”. So she could feel that there is someone to welcome her on this earth. This former relational experience is the base for all internal psychic resources and resilience the psychotherapist works out together with the patient or client on the base of sharing experience today.

3. How can the crisis be a starting point?

The oeconomical crisis as a loss of work for example has always a very strong impact on the personal development. An oeconomical crisis may establish a depression episode but a depression which was compensated through work and oeconomical security can become virulant. So the extern experienced crisis could be the initial stimulus for psychodynamic pathology and so an oeconomical crisis may become after some time an internal crisis which may have the consequences to fall into somatic disease. The personal psychic system may have not the resources to keep stabilized and find in different ways support in the family, by friends or official support to compensate the impact of the crisis. Like it was mentioned before the dramatic movement on the surface has always a link to the deep personality structure and how the patient or client is able to handle stress coming from internal conflicts is the key for falling into a depression episode or not. A former compensated internal conflict can become to a status where the patient is

overloaded and overwhelmed by his/hers internal movement or feelings which lead then to a deep psychic crisis.

4. What is the role of trainers, today?

The trainer for psychotherapists and counsellors should be aware of oeconomical development and issues coming from this deveolpment. The trainers should understand the background of oeconomical development and of unemployment. They should be aware of the different ways to handle stress coming from oeconomical crisis. The very focus should be on the issue of diagnosis the impact of the crisis on the personal way of handling stress and on the various ways to sharing crisis experiences as a special treatment planning.

5. Why should a student choose to attend a graduate school, today?

A graduate school how I understand this, is always helpful, because the link from theory to practise is based on supervision processes and on special reflections on a meta level. Problem solfing is always connected to meta- level thinking and therefore you do need inter colleagues' discussions and communications which should be offered in a graduate school. The awareness of practical implications of treatment coming from practical experience and will be reflected in an iterative procss of coming from experience towards theory and methodology and reversed. The assimilation of the way of reflection has the most powerful impact on the students, so it is necessary to organize situation together with students to reflect on cases together with trainers compared to the accommodation processes of integrating new knowlegde. Through this ways of learning

which are offered in a graduated learning process in graduate school the student also learn in a very practical way of meta level thinking a way of conceptualisation of feeling dimensions and processes.

Thank you.