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dictatorship
and after...

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Psychosocial and clinical elaboration
of collective traumas

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PROLOGUES

The team of health professionals of EATIP have been working for several decades contributing with their medical and psychological knowledge, helping to make people's conscience and values awaken; to open the minds and hearts of many so as to reset the personal situation of the victims who suffered torture as political prisoners; to show how belonging and lived situations have roots in identity and in the values taken upon oneself in socio-political and cultural commitment.

It is, thus, about the assistance and psychological treatment of victims of repression, of extreme situations and of social conflicts trying to re-establish emotional and psychological equilibrium, so as to be able to feel oneself once again as a person, to be able to look into the interior of one's own life, of society, of identity and of belonging.

It is finding the paths of memory, their diversity and the comprehension of what was lived; it must not be a step backwards into the past which only deepens existential drama and the denial of themselves.

Memory should illuminate the present so as to be able to construe new paths of dignity and to reset the social body, so very harmed by the dictatorial governments, both in Argentina as well as in Latin America.

The experiences of the team of professionals that belong to EATIP is summarized in this book, which develops an extensive analysis on psychological and psychosocial implications; it proposes the approach of accompanying the victims of torture; and of social dramas such as is the case of Cromagnon, with the death of many young adults and business and political responsibilities at the time of the event and the development and claim for the right to truth and justice.

Argentine and Latin American society is searching for paths to heal the wounds, and for this, it is necessary to count on memory, the search for truth, justice, reparation, and to bring down the walls of fear and intolerance. Truth many times is very painful, but it is always healing.

Hannah Arendt states in her book "*Totalitarianism*" concerning the violation of the individual person through torture: "*The system wants you to sign*

the confession. There must be some reason for this. A lying world of consistency which is more adequate to the human mind than reality itself".

Suffering is a particular experience and also one that is incommunicable, in that each time one is more subject to the 'necessity', to the dominion over pure and natural necessities.

The tortured person is reduced to a situation in which it is nature who is speaking, instead of freedom instead of one's conscience. What is speaking is pain, not the person; and Arendt continues: "*In the calculated use of torture there is also a special evil. The person is enclosed and confronted with the process in such a manner that infallibly makes the process win. You see, your conviction about your valour as a person is the worst of illusions. The process, then, is a Moloc that feeds on individuals. Every person will end up being eaten by him. Every person must pass through fire and come out "healed", that is to say, destroyed. A non-person, a being without an identity. Oh merciful therapy! It will not have to worry anymore about itself: for there is nobody!*"

The mechanisms imposed by the dictatorships in the Latin American continent through State terrorism were not accidental - they were part of a careful plan directed to bringing about structural changes in the submission of people, and they used terror in order to reach their objectives.

It is not only about giving assistance and treating the victims of torture or social conflicts, it is about comprehending as from society, the implications for their behaviours and to be able to overcome collective traumas.

Let us bear in mind that imposed mechanisms, such as fear, tried to paralyse society. And from fear to the denial of themselves is only a small step, that leads to the loss of values pertaining to peoples and to communities.

The challenge is to generate a critical conscience and values to comprehend the implications and imposed ideology. And to take up once again, the capacity of resistance which allows mental health as well as one's attitude towards life to recuperate.

EATIP's contribution is to be able to visualize and work upon the complex axes of the human, social, cultural and political condition. Silence, fear and insecurity have indented the will of the victims and the necessity of being able to overcome traumas.

Concerning silence, Dr. Daniel Kersner points out: "*Listening to the silence, you never miss the words*". And I would add that it is necessary to "*make the words create the path*", the energy of thinking and the capacity of social, cultural and political resistance of the peoples.

Psychosocial and clinical elaboration of collective traumas

There is still a long way to go on this path, such as the trials against those that violated human rights and considered themselves masters over the life and death of their victims, the rights of patients and society, the traumas and problems of the former soldiers who fought in the Falklands/Malvinas War, and who are burdened with conflictive situations and tensions that harm their lives.

This book is for all of society as a whole and it is a valuable contribution to health professionals.

ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL
1980 Nobel Peace Prize Awardee

In all societies, constructive and destructive forces of the human fabric that make it up are opposed. These forces can be found more intensely rooted in those individuals that construct their subjectivity around the values that they feel they must defend in a more compromising manner, more constantly and systematically all along their lives. Most human beings share some aspects of these people – that flame that makes us move collectively in moments of historic definitions for our survival. Meanwhile, the vanguard groups are the ones that act. Some to defend privileges, to maintain unjust differences among men and women, to force many to satisfy the needs of a few; and others to promote the exact opposite. The first group acts obligatorily outside all social contracts, in an illegal and illegitimate manner; the second group has, necessarily, to re-establish the legal conditions so as to be able to go forth with their ideals: Thanatos and Eros in a permanent struggle to impose the second group over the first, to install peace, civilized culture, justice and respect for the others as the basic principles of human co-existence. The authors of this book belong to the group of social vanguard that struggle continuously so that these values may prevail among mankind.

In Argentina, over the last 35 years, the Argentine people have been slowly healing the wounds left by the last great confrontation against the privileged sectors and social selfishness. The maximum representatives of the civic-military coup of 1976 have had to render accounts, and they continue to do so, of their perverse actions before the law courts of the State of law, in a manner that has no comparison in modern history. We did not wait, as in other places, for time to placate the urge for justice and open the archives or to condemn in absentia those responsible for such deplorable and unspeakable crimes. Here, led by human rights organizations and popular activism, the Argentine citizens demand, incessantly; we manifest ourselves in each and every key moment of history, that justice be done to those who are guilty. As from the Malvinas War and the installment of democracy, a struggle to bring those responsible for the genocide before the

law and be tried began. And although carried out in a rather contradictory manner, with comings and goings imposed by those who succeeded in power in political life, a directional line can be distinguished which dominated the course of recent history: the trial against those guilty and the restitution – as integrally as possible – to the victims of State terrorism.

Along this path, the original traumas had to be attended to as well as the consequences of individual and collective retraumatization (a concept brilliantly clarified by the authors of this book) that brought about the distant and more current events of political and social repression of those terrible years. In this enormous task, the contribution of the members of EATIP, Argentine Team of Psychosocial Work and Research (Equipo Argentino de Trabajo e Investigación Psicosocial), who work in mental health, has had and continues to have full-scale leadership.

The path has not been an easy one. It was filled with achievements and frustrations that required enormous doses of energy and enthusiasm so as not to be discouraged when faced with the doubts, delays and treason of politicians who tried to sweep the continuity of the action of justice under the carpet through the laws of “due obedience” and “full stop”, or with illegitimate pardons. Another tactic they used was to try to paralyse the witnesses through the use of newer forms of criminal actions such as the disappearance of Julio López. However, none of these maneuvers, to either facilitate or cause unjustified legal delays, has managed to overcome popular conscience. The accusing voices, with their terrible testimonies continue to sound in the ears of the Argentines, who are more sensitive than ever to them, accompanying them and sustaining them in their search for truth and justice.

The tasks that were required in this long march could not simply end in the legal and judicial aspects of the problems, they needed an integral response to be able to focus on the victims, in an integral manner, and on the consequences of the repression. Thus, professionals from different disciplines were needed to devote themselves to studying the inedited problems that presented themselves and to propose concepts and modify practices so as to find solutions. The workers in mental health felt that had been convoked to give the necessary scientific and technical support to this cause.

The members of EATIP, founded in 1990 and whose Executive Committee had founded, beforehand, the *Psychological Assistance to Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Team* (Equipo de Asistencia Psicológica de Madres de Plaza de Mayo) accompanying them in their protests since the times of

the dictatorship in 1979 until 1990, permanently participated in this work through an intense programme of research-action that allowed them to make fundamental contributions to the fight against torture and against any other human rights violations. In their own words “*The clinical work (in a very broad sense) carried out during the dictatorship was the basis and model for our work, since the specific characteristics of said practice become, in time, theories and concepts, as well as the necessity for the search of concepts of other authors that served us as support and articulation for our experiences and ideas.*”

The members of EATIP, who believe that the assistance which they give to the victims of human rights violations is their way of contributing to the fight from their specific field, comment the following: “*As a group and as individual persons who are affected [...] it implied a very clear position in relation to the exercise of the professional role, being this conjunction between what is political and what is professional precisely that which defines us. Because our work continues [...] in the different contexts in which we find ourselves with those directly affected: marches, squares, police stations, court rooms, institutions of belonging, meeting places, etc.*”

Also over the years, EATIP has incorporated and trained new members who have integrated themselves wholly to their work and have systematically developed the diffusion of its theoretical concepts and its models of assistance, obtained in the specific area of work, in professional academic and extra-academic circles – thus forming a mass of theoretical and practical knowledge on a subject that constitutes one of the most solid ones at an international level. In this sense, this book is a milestone on the path already filled with the publication of other important books, as have been: *Efectos Psicológicos de la Represión Política* (1986), *La Impunidad. Una perspectiva psicosocial y clínica* (1995), *Paisajes del Dolor, Senderos de Esperanza. Salud mental y derechos humanos en el cono sur* (2002). This last book was published together with other similar organizations in Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. *Psychological and psycho-social effects of repression and impunity. From the dictatorship up to the present* (2005), *Por-venires de la Memoria* (2007) and innumerable chapters in other collective works, articles and conferences which the authors have presented in congresses as well as international and national scientific meetings.

In the following pages the reader can become more acquainted, in the first part, with the recent research on the complex problems brought about by the re-traumatization of the witnesses of the trials for truth, and the

manner in which the therapists of EATIP technically position themselves so as to give these people psychological support. In the second part, the reader can inform himself about group approach and the assistance given to the prisoners who were victims of torture, as well as other applied clinical methods used in the assistance given to Latin American refugees. The third part of the book reflects on the effects of the psycho-social traumas to culture and subjectivity that are brought about by violence and insecurity, in themselves, and through the artistic media and mass means of communication. In the fourth part of the book, the reader will be able to understand the hidden paths of the trans-generational transmission of the traumatic effects of State terrorism in the children of the missing-detainees and political exiles; while in the fifth and last part of the book, the reader can become immersed in current problems such as the ideological commitment of the mental health professionals in their daily work, the ethical aspects as well as controversial subjects such as assistance to torturers and the reaches and limits of informed consent within the framework of respect to the rights of patients.

It is an honour, which I am deeply grateful for, to present this new book of my friends and colleagues at EATIP, which will undoubtedly update - in an essential manner - the heritage of Argentine culture through the issues that they have been studying and investigating these last years.

Juan Carlos Stagnaro
Professor, Department of Mental Health
School of Medicine, University of Buenos Aires
President of the Association of Argentine Psychiatrists (APsA)

INTRODUCTION

When some of us wrote our first book *Psychological Effects of Political Repression* (Efectos Psicológicos de la Represión Política), with the ideas that we had elaborated as from the experience we had shared with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, we chose a quote from a speech by Galileo Galilei by Bertold Brecht: “... *My opinion is that the only objective of science is to relieve human suffering. If scientists let themselves be terrified by tyrants and limit themselves to simply accumulating knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself, then science will become an invalid and new machines will only be useful for producing new calamities...*”.

The words have always moved me, time and again, because in a very simple manner the relationship between ethics, science and social necessities are placed at the centre of the discussion.

Twenty-five years after the publication of that book, which we remember with affection, this quotation continues to have, for us, the same consistency that it had then and expresses the meaning which we give to the psycho-social and clinical work that we develop in EATIP. It also helps to sustain us and to find our own coherence in a period of uncertainty, conflict, questioning and doubts that affect us as well as other professionals and intellectuals.

The annulment of the laws of due obedience and full stop in 2004 meant a great achievement after so many years of struggle of our people and it opened a new period in relation to the clamor for punishment to the genocidaires of the dictatorship.

This fact makes it evident that it is possible, through persistent collective action, to generate a instituting field that expresses itself in concrete conquests, while at the same time, it commits ourselves towards the need to continue in our path of producing profound changes that assure the reality of a true “never again”.

It would have been unthinkable to even think about starting the trials against the repressors without the background of the social uprisings, the events of 19 and 20 December, 2001, which broke out after the decree of the

state of siege was imposed, in which thousands of Argentine citizens took to the streets and public squares in the country and shouted “enough!”.

Also, the beginning of this millennium in Latin America, coinciding with the bicentennial anniversary of the first attempts of independence in the region, evidences that something has changed with respect to the period of absolute hegemony of the so-called neo-liberalism, and the people – who with different characteristics and modes – we again become the protagonists of our own history and fight to conquer our second and definitive independence to free ourselves from oppression, exploitation and injustice. The members of EATIP are a group of mental health professionals who, from different practices and perspectives with respect to concepts, feel that they have been convoked to participate in the construction of the necessary path to make the dreams of social change that our history has been clamoring for, a reality.

We also think that it is possible to interpellate our disciplines so as to find theoretical and technical instruments which, at the same time that they are opening new perspectives of development within themselves and in their exchange, can contribute to the understanding and transformation of reality.

Today, this interpellation, within the plane of social and scientific practices, is more necessary than ever, since the old paradigms do not take into account the new realities that we have to face and, just now there are the beginnings, in an embryonic state, that have not yet taken on the form of new paradigms. A passionate challenge of the times: to comprehend, create and revolutionize practices and ideas, questioning ourselves all along this path.

The purpose our Team’s new book, which gathers the experience of psycho-social and clinical work that we have carried out in the last years in relation to the different human rights problems of today is to contribute as from our practices and concepts, to the development of this necessary – and surely fertile – exchange. In this sense, we are deeply grateful to our dear colleague, Lía Ricón, with whom we share ideas and concerns, for her invaluable contributions.

This book, besides its contents, which spring forth from the analysis of the interior feelings of our daily work, represents something special for us. It is a collective production, an elaboration in which all of us have contributed something, from different optics and interests to a common concern, a desire that allowed us to sustain our project of work through time, and

to construct, upon the basis of the acknowledgement of the contribution of numerous authors, a corpus of their own ideas concerning psychological, psycho-social and approach mechanisms, to which we will refer to. The overlappings and repetitions that can be found throughout the reading of this book are a product of this construction of concepts on which we have based our practices.

With a lot of effort, material and subjective difficulties, with the inevitable tensions among personal, group and institutional expectations, with differences of concepts, philosophy, as well social, political and scientific issues that we deal in, we have worked to make the ideology of an “us” a reality, one which overcomes the inevitable narcissisms and helps us in the task of articulating our concerns for what is social in the profession that we chose and still love.

So many years of shared work, for some of us it has meant long and significant periods of our lives; for others, it has been the period of their lives in which they have affirmed themselves as committed professionals and, finally, for those who are younger, it has been a moment of new experiences in which they collect experience in order to be able to face future challenges, all these things have made us go along the path with the contribution of different generations, which has, in turn, forced us to carry out work of intergenerational elaboration.

This position that we have assumed implies an intense psychic and conceptual work, which helps us to sustain our work and our critical spirit.

DIANA KORDON
EATIP – Coordinator

APPROACHES

Specific views of EATIP's activities of assistance

Darío Lagos and Diana Kordon.

INTRODUCTION

The *Argentine Team of Psycho-social Work and Research* (EATIP) is an institution integrated by psychiatrists, psychologists, general practitioners and administrative employees which was founded in 1990.

Our psychosocial and clinical work is centered on issues concerning mental health and human rights. We give psychological assistance to people or groups who have undergone direct or indirect political repression during the period of State terrorism and diverse forms of human rights violations during constitutional periods.

We have different areas of work: community, clinical, formation, training and research. We develop tasks in collaboration with different social, human rights, university and professional institutions.

Our Team and the work of assistance that we carry out are permanently affected by the demands of psychosocial events, in that we feel part of what is collective with instituting purposes.

The professionals who created EATIP had previously been a part of the *Team of Psychological Assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (*Equipo de Asistencia Psicológica de Madres de Plaza de Mayo*), which collaborated with the Mothers during the dictatorship and afterwards until 1990.

From that experience, we were able to formulate some founding ideas that make up the specificity of our work.

And although our main activity continues to be that which is related to political repression, the demands - in many opportunities -, exceed what we can actually do. When situations of social crisis arise or those denominated "social catastrophes" (like the terrible fire at Cromagnon, unemployment, floods, etc.) by participating from the *institution* with popular solidarity and by placing our instruments at the disposal of those affected, a psychological demand is produced in the people, groups and institutions that develop a social practice of response to the suffered trauma.

We conceive solidarity to be a practice carried out in common with others, to obtain determined objectives and which constructs an *us*. It is doing something *with others*, not for others. In this joint going forth and construction we modify ourselves through our behaviour and our ideas.

This concept of solidarity is intertwined with the mythical history of our institution, which is important in reference to the institutional transference of its members and the people who consult us. As in all groups or institutions, ours also contains “founding myths” that give sense to our work, to the what and for what is our team, which we have collectively constructed and is being transmitted from one generation to another. One of them is to serve the people; in other words, to recognize within ourselves, the need to take upon ourselves – from our specific role in the psi field – a commitment with social development and within its interior, to put our instruments of intervention to work. Obviously, this originating myth is based on a symbolic structure in which we define objectives, ideas, methodologies, etc.

Our clinical and psycho-social work over the many years has made our practice and concepts more complex. In these last years, numerous debates and experiences in relation to the comprehension of psycho-social problems have been carried and these, too, have helped us to permanently re-think the conditions of our practice and the ideas that we uphold.

In this process we have modified mechanisms, both by analysis and the questioning of experience as well as by the characteristics of each concrete moment. In this manner, we can say that between the Team of Mothers and today, both continuities and breakups can be found. And in reference to the ideas-force that we have formulated as from that experience, and which we consider are in accordance to the present situation, we would like to point out the following:

- Social traumas affect not only those directly involved but the whole of the social body, and it extends to various generations. During the dictatorship, we presupposed this transgenerational incidence. But our experience, both at the social level and the individual level, has confirmed what we had previously supposed.
- When going through a traumatic situation of a social nature, it deeply affects subjectivity and the psyche so the subject has to perform a complex process of bereavement and readjustment in life. There is a wide range of elaborative responses as well as responses of active adaptation to reality. We consider that this does not necessarily lead to a pathology.

- The spontaneous grouping that comes about among those directly affected in order to give a common response to the problems they share, plays an important role for the preservation of the psyche. Within the framework of this type of grouping, an important part of the reparatory and elaborative work of what is traumatic is developed. As we have pointed out on several occasions, the elaboration is simultaneously public and social, as well as intimate and private. "The problems of trauma are linked not only to the de-structuring accumulation of stimuli but also to the sense that this acquires for each person, and to the possibility of finding or maintaining adequate support for the psyche. But both the individual sense of the trauma as well as the possibility of maintaining or obtaining the adequate support are linked, in these cases, to the social processing of the traumatic situation". (Edelman and Kordon, 1995, page 103).
- When the subjective incidence of what is traumatic is very strong and the process of symbolization is obstructed, and the trauma is locked in the psyche like a stone so that it cannot be elaborated and produces effects - at times even distant from the situation of origin - then, in this case, a psychotherapeutic approach is required.
- When a pathology exists, it is expressed with a highly individual variability. Frequently, symptoms present themselves which many authors find are in correspondence to post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Taking into account that the subject is constituted within the interior of an intersubjective matrix, and that the family is the bearer of the order of the culture and that social belonging is a constitutive aspect of personal identity, the so-called social context works as an internal factor in subjectivity.
- In social traumas it is of fundamental importance to analyse the incidence in the subjectivity of the different discourses that are produced in relation to the emergence. The social practice of response to the traumatic situation is the basis for unraveling the content and signification of the dominant social discourse. During this process new discourses are collectively construed and elaborated as from the said shared actions, giving a new meaning to things and, also, defining another principle of reality for the work of bereavement.
- A fundamental aspect of the dominant discourses is given by the induction to silence and placing the blame on the affected people.

This tends to dilute the responsibilities of the State, the authorities and officials.

- The subjective impact of the traumatic situation is different for each subject, not only according to the individual characteristics of each person but also – among other aspects – according to the type of affectation lived through, to the vital moment and to the generation to which one belongs, with the acknowledgement and social assessment of the trauma and with the support that one counts with.
- Besides the role of the spontaneous grouping, group mechanisms are an ideal instrument for the work of the elaboration of the symbolization of the traumatic situations.
- When social situations of emergency are produced, we go to the field of the events, in the first place, as an action of concrete solidarity. From this presence, the demand for different work of assistance arises. Experience has shown us that all this is not about sitting in our consulting offices waiting, but rather accompanying those directly affected *when* and *where* the problem presents itself.
- Trust – supported in the shared comprehension of the character of the social trauma, it causes and responsibilities – plays an important role in the establishment of a working alliance, between our institution and the people or groups of people with whom we develop psychosocial work.

As we have already pointed out, the vicissitudes of subjectivity in traumatic situations and/or of social crisis oblige us to examine our intervention strategies. We use the concept of intervention because it allows us to refer to the different mechanisms of our work with subjectivity.

In a previous article (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos and Kersner, 2002), we analysed the general characteristics of our model of approach. In this opportunity, we will state some complementary points with respect to our current psychosocial and clinical work.

Clinical approach

Clinical approach is developed within a framework of a network determined by institutional conditions, those who come for the consultation, the therapists and the inter-relationship with other institutions.

Admission

The people who come to our institution for assistance are those who have been referred to us by human rights associations, professional or social institutions, state institutions, other patients or professionals, and by the public knowledge of the existence of EATIP.

The admission is carried out, with some exceptions, within the physical installation of the institution. This is a decision of the Team so as to leave a mark – from the first contact – that the agreement of work is with the institution and not only with the therapist the person will be referred to.

As from the telephone call requesting the first interview, the secretaries offer containment and point out the interest of the institution in seeing the person. This includes, for example, adapting the appointments to the possibilities of those who request one and being able to discern if there is a situation of urgency or not, among other things. The space of admission is a place which favours the deployment of institutional transference. It is there that the pertinence of treatment is evaluated and, in case it is necessary, the time and space needed for the development of the therapeutic process is explained. The proposal of therapy is based on the criteria of implementing a mechanism that favours subjective elaboration, although a diagnosis of psycho-pathological behavior is not ruled out.

We place importance on the construction of an alliance of work with those that consult us. We sustain this criterion for any institution that works in the field of mental health, since psychological work is carried out with people who are undergoing situations of suffering and this is a protective agreement, for the patient as well as for the therapist. Both parties feel sustained by institutional support. The search for a relationship that is containing is directed not only to the therapist, but also to the institution as a whole.

We have been able to prove that a relationship exists between the people who request consultation which predominates in each period and the social phenomena linked to human rights problems. For example, as a consequence of the dictatorship and the clamour for justice, mothers of the missing-detainees, children, former missing-detainees, those exiled or former political prisoners have had – in different moments – a greater presence in the consultations, according to the social processes which, at the time, were more pressing or urgent. Currently, the witnesses and complainants in the trials against the genocidaires are those who are occupying this place.

The demand gives us sense and valorization in our work. It stimulates our Team in the comprehension of the necessities of those who consult us and in the mechanisms to be implemented. From the consultor/consultee relationship doubts arise which help us to avoid becoming theoretically and technically bureaucratic.

From admission, the people are then referred to group or individual treatment.

Therapeutic process

Treatment is carried out in EATIP's offices or at the private consulting offices of the therapists, according to how it is decided by the therapist. Treatment can be either individual, familial or couple, and they do not exclude a combination of these different types. During the therapeutic process we construct a relationship that allows us to use a work of elaboration in common. We consider that this fulfills a support function which helps to alleviate the suffering. And also, it is a privileged instrument, due to the intersubjective character of the work that is being carried out in its elaboration and symbolization. As we advance in this shared work – in the understanding of the why and the for what of behavior, ideas and disturbing affections, and of difficulties in interpersonal relationships – possibilities to modify behavior and mechanisms of psychic functioning start to open.

We work with our patients by approaching their general problems, and within these problems, we deal with the incidence of the traumatic situation that they have lived through. As we pointed out in another book: *“many of the middle-term to long-term consultations do not recognize the problems related to what was traumatic as a manifest motive, those which even though they defensively tried to encapsulate, continue to produce effects. During the development of the process of therapy, the links between the symptoms appear very clearly, as well as the structure of the person's personality and the suffered trauma. These links are discovered by the patient himself, thus making the therapeutic environment fulfill habilitating functions”*. (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos and Kersner, 2002: 286).

A problem that arises is the following: during treatment we work on the comprehension of the set of processes that are at stake in the psychic reality of each patient. This implies that the work of metabolization of what is traumatic puts the mobilization of a fantasy world and of relationships into play as well as the articulation between fantasy and social representations

and the modes of being in the world. All this is present in the here and now. The therapy is not one of focus – so this means that frequently therapy can be relatively prolonged.

The work of linking what is traumatic, the comprehension of its signification and the creation of new feelings also allow the patient to escape from the entrapment produced by alienating mechanisms.

We place importance on our oral interventions. However, the way in which we relate to our patients is no less significant. As from the manner of greeting, the affectionate tone, the greater or lesser distance that we establish – all these things have to do with our availability to create a trusting relationship.

There are no hard and fast rules for all the patients. A particular emotional and reflexive environment is created for each one. Each therapeutic process is different: it has its own rhythm, requires a greater or lesser participation on our part, needs a specific type of commitment, more or less functions of the auxiliary ego (that will make us – among other things – answer telephone calls between sessions or a specific follow-up of concrete projects). It is about listening within a work in common with the singularity of the subject or of the members within the relationship, to jointly discover the significations that the events of life have for the individual or the group; and to open new paths which until that moment had been obstructed.

We think it is relevant for the therapist and patient to take the therapeutic space as an environment of freedom that allows us to put our potential of transforming and creating into play.

The transference with the institution produces effects, not only in the people who consult us, but also in the institution itself and in the professionals that work there. This requires an analysis within the interior of the Team. The consultations, trust and demands themselves are towards the institution. When a conflict in the interior of the therapeutic process and if the treatment or the patient requires it (sometimes outwardly in words), the clinical team analyses and participates in the solution of the problem.

In other moments we refer to the subject of neutrality as something impossible.

Frequently several members of the same family are treated in the institution. When this occurs and the situation thus requires it, the therapists with the patient's consent, discuss the possibility of implementing relationship mechanisms.

An ethical problem that must be dealt with is that of confidentiality. Some patients are people who, due to their public activities, can be easily recognized. In these cases we are especially careful in respecting their right to privacy and anonymity, even among the members of the professional Team.

In our therapeutic work, we are not only understanding the patient and sustaining a reparatory desire towards the other but we are also giving reparation to ourselves as well as enriching ourselves.

OTHER MODALITIES OF INTERVENTION

Crisis Interventions

Whenever it is possible, we go to the places in which political repression or other critical social situations are taking place. Our presence in the field in which the events are occurring, offering our collaboration in whatever is needed, is a fundamental aspect of what we define as a psychosocial intervention. This immediate and solidary relationship when faced with the critical situation has different positive results: it allows us to prove that there has been aggression on the part of the security forces – to whom we demand dignified treatment – , to support and contain the people that can be decompensated, collaborate in the making of denouncements, etc. But the thing is simply to be there. This simply being there is a fundamental pillar in the construction of mutual trust, and at the same time, it allows us to become more familiar with the situation and, thus, understand it better.

Visits to jails and police stations

We visit people who have been detained due to political reasons. In the following chapter, we describe an experience we had in relation to some political prisoners in Las Heras.

Non-formalized psychological interventions

At first, we called these non-systematized interventions (Lagos, 1995). For a long time, even when we were the *Team of the Mothers*, we did not consider them as actions of psychological intervention. In the end, it was the Mothers themselves and other relatives who recognized the therapeutic

effect of this kind of intervention and called our attention to its effectiveness. Over time we have been carrying out these interventions, basically as from our insertion into the environment of the social movement, especially that of human rights, and in the relationship that we establish with people who come to our institution or who participate in the mechanisms of reflection groups.

In some cases, these interventions are instances of spontaneous grouping, in which specific consultations are made in reference to relationship problems which arise in the group. Other times it comes about as an occasional conversation in an informal setting, which has come about from doubts or questions linked to personal issues.

Evaluation by a medical doctor

We are carrying out a retrospective revision of the medical history of the patients of the institution with the purpose of collecting information on the incidence and prevalence of clinical pathologies in people who have been victims of torture and their families.

On the other hand, the medical-clinical evaluation is also being performed on all the patients who due to their current or past signs/symptoms have required said revision. This has been done with the purpose of registering the significant information and orienting and/or referring the patient so as to receive a more adequate treatment.

We have always been alert to the organic signals (hypertension and other cardiovascular affectations, diabetes, cancer, glandular disorders, etc.) and their relation to the lived traumatic experiences. Currently, as from the trials against the genocidaires and the disappearance of Julio López, we have been able to corroborate the correspondence between the lived experiences of helplessness, the re-living of what is traumatic and of re-traumatization with organic pathologies.

Legal advice

Legal advice is given to those patients who are undergoing legal processes because of the criminalization of the current social protests, or who wish to start legal proceedings of economic reparation due to crimes against humanity.

Group mechanisms

Working in groups, whether they are community groups or small reflection groups, is a modality of choice for the subjective, personal and collective elaboration of different problems that arise from social traumas. In our work in Reflection Groups we go further into detail in this matter.

Expert witness declarations

We carry out psychological and psychiatric expert witness declarations as well as medical-psychological reports for different legal proceedings. This task consists of using our professional duty as psychiatrists to write a report that proves the suffered trauma of the patient, or demands adequate conditions for those who give testimony in the trials against the repressors. We also participate as expert witnesses in the psychiatric evaluation of the genocidaires to determine if they are fit to be brought to trial or not.

Professional liability

The underlying responsibility of this task requires that the professionals undergo a constant work of formation. This means guaranteeing the capability, the conceptual and technical solvency and also the appropriation – on the part of the members of the Team – , of a corpus of ideas of the specificity of the problems which we encounter, of their simultaneous and interactive connection between what is individual and what is collective. To be able to confront these necessities, we carry out athenaeums, supervisions – which we understand to be a shared work of collaboration –, seminars and workshops.

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Accompanying political prisoners who have been victims of torture

Darío Lagos, Yamila Pezet, Montserrat Olivera, Pablo Habif and Nicolás Pedregal.

“Torture is understood as any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected to have committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity (...).”

United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984.

INTRODUCCION

During January and February 2006, in the provinces of Santa Cruz and Chubut in the Argentine Patagonia (provinces located at more than 2,000 kilometres from the Buenos Aires, the capital city), oil workers staged a strike that shook the whole country as they formed pickets blocking the entrance and exit of oil from the company. After detaining some of the leaders of these workers, a gathering of people was carried out in the city of Las Heras, in the north-west region of the province of Santa Cruz, demanding that those detained be set free.

On the night of February 6, thousands of people gathered at the Mayor's office in Las Heras and due to the brutal police repression that followed, general confusion broke out and a policeman, Jorge Sayago, was killed.

On February, 24, eight workers (most were oil workers) were arbitrarily detained and accused of the first degree murder of the policeman. These eight people were physically and psychologically tortured at the moment of their detention and during their trip to the prison of Puerto Deseado. Police personal forced them to self-incriminate themselves and to accuse themselves reciprocally under threats that their families would be killed and/or tortured. The policemen also forced them to sing the National Anthem and left them hanging in the back part of the truck while they told those detained they were going to rape their wives. The Chief of Police of the city of Puerto Deseado, who received the men after they had been tortured, after checking the severe injuries they had been subjected to, immediately requested that a forensic doctor check their health and write down his findings in an official statement. This chief of police had a positive disposition with regard to facilitating our professional activity in the prison under his command.

The national government decided to send more than 200 border guards to the conflict zone. The city became militarized and the state of siege was declared. From that moment on, a wave of mass detentions took place in the city of Las Heras in which torture was used against men, women and children. Thus silence and fear were instilled among the inhabitants.

The parish priest of the city, Luis Bicego, denounced the gravity of the situation before the mass means of communication on a national level, comparing the situation that was occurring in the province to the State terrorism of the last military dictatorship.

A few days afterwards, a numerous delegation of Human Rights organizations travelled urgently to the city of Las Heras, in order to show their solidarity to those affected by the repression and to demand from the authorities, the due respect to the guarantees and human rights of the people set forth in the National Constitution.

With the exception of a period in which they were under house arrest between October 2007 and February 2008, the detained workers underwent physical and psychological torture and remained in pretrial detention for three years. At the end of February, 2009, they were set free, a long time after the end of the maximum time that the law states that someone can be detained without having been tried. The law allows for an extension of one year more (three years) in cases where there is a flight risk. This was the law that was used in this case.

Even today the courts in Santa Cruz have not proceeded to go through with the trials of the cases of the defendants. Meanwhile, the police and other

officials responsible for the illegal treatment of the workers are free, notwithstanding the reiterated accusations of the relatives of those detained.

The Team of Work: its composition

In the month of April, 2006, our Team started to accompany and give assistance to the detained workers and their families – this lasted the three years these people were detained. At first, our work consisted in giving solidarity to the people. We feel that solidarity in itself is a fundamental factor of support for those people who suffer a traumatic situation of social origin.

EATIP formed a team of “field work”¹ that travelled to the province of Santa Cruz. Up to this moment (June 2009) they have done 8 trips, of a frequency between every three to six months. On every trip there was a delegation of two or three professionals, so as to allow continuity for a fluid contact with the population that needed assistance.

As from the characteristics of our practice, the need of legal support arose. So as from the year 2008, we count with the assistance of lawyers from Liberpueblo², a human rights organization, who also participated in some of the trips.

A. Activities carried out during the trips

In each one of the trips we carried out different tasks, which fundamentally consisted in:

1- Visits to the imprisoned workers in their respective places of detention (Pico Truncado, Caleta Olivia, Puerto Deseado, Perito Moreno, Los Antiguos).

This activity was fundamental because it meant an important support that helped to diminish the feeling of isolation.

At a determined moment we contacted the Sub-secretariat of Human Rights of the Nation so that they might intercede before the Secretariat of Human Rights of Santa Cruz. The purpose of this contact was to allow us to

1 Under the coordination of Dr. Dario Lagos, this team was integrated by professionals who are members of the community area: Dr. Daniel Kersner, Lic. Monserrat Olivera, Lic. Yamila Pezet, Lic. Pablo Habif and Lic. Nicolás Pedregal.

2 Drs. Nicolás Tauber Sanz and Patricio Gaynor.

be able to visit those detained with the endorsement of the Secretariat. Our access to the different police stations and prisons was facilitated because the Secretariat of Human Rights of the Nation had told them beforehand about our visit.

We were also able to directly confirm the physical and psychic state of those detained as well as their living conditions. We were able to see the type of relationship they maintained with their families and friends, if they received visits or not, the consequences of the situation of isolation, the living together with other detained people and with the police. While we were constructing a relationship of trust we managed, as far as the possibilities allowed us, to function as articulating hinges between those “inside” the situation of imprisonment and those “outside” in the community.

The places (police stations, prisons) where the detained people had been taken were hundreds of kilometres away from Las Heras, where most of the families of those detained lived. Due to the great distance and economic factors, many times it was difficult for the families to visit their loved ones in prison.

One of the problems stated at the beginning was that those detained – as we had pointed out earlier – were separated from each other, and did not receive visits from their co-workers. They felt abandoned by their co-workers, when in reality what was happening was that there was an express prohibition for visits other than direct relatives.

2. Getting closer to the families and being at their disposal

We telephoned the families of those detained thanks to the information the prisoners had given us once we had construed a relationship with them.

We contacted the *Commission of Fighting Women*, which gathered wives, mothers and sisters of those detained, and we visited them in their houses – some of these were quite precarious and in the process of construction, where the problem of heating was almost as important as the problem of eating. The relationship that we established with the wives and mothers, especially, helped to strengthen family and community resources and also helped them to maintain their objectives of accompanying their relative imprisoned beyond any adversity that might arise. At those times when we were with them, we tried to put forth our capacity of listening and support when faced with the lived traumatic situations.

3. Articulation with the resources of the community

We also contacted the unions and other social organizations (neighbourhood and community). We especially worked with Luis Bicego, the parish priest of Las Heras, a loyal example of all priests who commit their pastoral activities to the causes of those who suffer, the oppressed and the outcast. In the difficult conditions of terror and silence, this priest lifted his voice to make his denouncements heard and permanently placed all his efforts in his solidarity with the prisoners. He received us warmly and was, for us, a source of knowledge of the concrete reality during this period.

4. Interviews with police authorities, judges, district attorneys/prosecutors and lawyers

All these meetings were organized with the purpose of obtaining greater information about the situation of those detained, to claim for their release and to make a follow-up of the legal situation. Among the things that were organised, with the consent of those detained, were: interviews, telephone calls to lawyers and social workers, and sending notes to the district attorneys in the cases. We wrote reports that we presented to the Human Rights Secretariat of the Nation and the province of Santa Cruz, and we contacted the officials that were responsible in this area. We had a series of interviews with the judge in the case, in which relatives and lawyers participated, in order to establish the legal situation of those detained and to claim for their release while the process was ongoing.

We also carried out activities of solidarity from the Federal Capital with other Human Rights organizations. We contacted Congressmen/women of the Nation, in an effort to make the situation of those detained, their families and the involved communities, known. We also had the opportunity to contact Monseigneur Romanin, the bishop of Rio Gallegos, who commented that he was extremely interested in the situation of those detained and in the events that were unfolding in that province; and that precisely that day he had been visiting those detained in their places of detention, giving them support and his pastoral comprehension.

B. Specific psychosocial interventions

Only after our first direct contact with the situation could we define some tactical and strategic issues. We started from the premise that our role fulfills a function of support, sustainment and solidarity.

Our aim was to establish a link of continuity among the “inside” of the situation of enclosure – jail – and those “outside” in the community – the daily life of relatives and other people involved – .

We collaborated with specific instruments in the process of elaboration of the traumatic situation and this was achieved by recognizing and making known the limits of our intervention, with the continuity of our presence over time and by respecting the decisions of those affected. This sometimes implied frustrating some exaggerated expectations on the part of those detained and their relatives to whom we had to explain that the objective of our presence in the area was not to replace the action of the relatives and the community.

Once more we have been able to prove the value of helping through solidarity, putting our professional resources at the disposal of those affected and their relatives and community. These resources are based on our capacity to understand the traumatic situation that they are living through and to give them a more objective or distant focus that helps them to think of the situation from a different perspective.

As we have already pointed out, one of our objectives was to collaborate in maintaining the support of “...*social bond, which constitutes a condition of possibility for the existence itself of the psyche and the guarantee of its continuity through time, it influences the elaboration of trauma, of crises and of situations of social disaster*”. (Edelman and Kordon, 2002: 197).

Our intervention in these types of situations requires an important degree of flexibility. We are aware of the actions that we can carry out and that help – in a concrete manner – the objective of obtaining the release of those who are detained, and meanwhile, improve the situation of detention, as well as that which helps them in the subjective process. Every visit and telephone call showed those detained that we felt them as part of a group, that there was a social recognition of their existence. For them, this meant the possibility of feeling included in a collective manner, of being taken into account, of being taken care of by other people. E-mails, telephone calls, faxes, etc. give the continuity that assures them that a relationship exists in spite of the distance, that there are people who are interested in their fate. For example, when confronted with repressive situations in the prisons, they decided to go on a hunger strike and would inform us of the processes and also, frequently, they would request that we make these situations known.

Through this period of accompanying the victims, we were able to see the effects that our non-formal interventions produced. As we have already mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of this strategy sprung forth from the experience of the members of our team while they were giving psychological assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. This type of non-formal assistance, not conceived as such initially, arises and develops at the moment of the meeting with the members of the natural group. “These interventions come about as from the permanent and non-formal insertion of the members of the professional team in the natural group and in the institution”. (Lagos, 1995: 195). In this case, the task was carried out in the institutions where those detained were being held as well as in the spaces of contact with family members (churches, unions, public spaces, homes and bars).

After three years, the process of psycho-social intervention adopted a new dynamics when the accused people were released.

C. Some consequences of the traumatic situation

One of the most important consequences of the lived traumatic situation for those that were affected was a subjective unsustainment, due to the accusation of a grave crime pending on them, which influenced – either consciously or unconsciously – the valuation of some of the persons that they knew and this compromised their self-esteem. This unsustainment was also brought about by the loss of their places of reference and belonging (familiar context, work, unions and other places to which they belonged); and by the distance between the place of detention and their homes; by the lack of sense in the punishment which they were made to go through (not only the possible sentence in the future but also the loss of freedom in the present); by the feeling of uncertainty that they felt on a daily basis; and by the waiting for an explanation of what had happened. In other words, the imposition of a lack of positive acknowledgement, and the allocation from the discourse of power, of a new social position – the position of guilty parties of the murder of Sayago, a policeman, – affected their feelings of social belonging.

Some other considerations must be added to this situation and should be considered as aggravating circumstances of the trauma:

- a) During the first months, the co-workers and companions of those imprisoned gave solidary contributions to the commission that were

equivalent to their salaries. After a while and after the movement had received a few blows, these contributions slowly petered out.

- b) Intelligence Services introduced a campaign of rumors with the purpose of disqualifying those imprisoned and their families before the rest of the community.
- c) The difficulty of finding penal lawyers and/or to pay the bails. This, in turn, generated differences as some of those detained could only count on the public defendant.
- d) As a punishment, the prisoners were separated from each other and taken to other prisons in the province, thus putting great distances to be traveled for visits. As a consequence, not all the families could make the financial or physical effort to visit their loved ones.
- e) The different comprehension of the reason for the detentions and of the ill treatment to which they were subjected.

D. Possible solutions when confronted with the situation of crisis

A very important factor that we registered when the people were faced with a situation of abandonment produced by the crisis was the subjective importance of having defined themselves as political prisoners. This process consisted of a movement of de-identification in the place that they occupied as guilty parties and to re-identify themselves in this new place as political prisoners. This new place acquired a new sense for those affected and had as an inflexion point the letter they wrote and was published, after a year of being detained, thus making known their situation. There is a comprehension which grants signification to the occurred events, thus making it possible to feel oneself as part of a group.

What brought about so much uncertainty was beginning to acquire sense for them. In this case, it was clearly political: to understand the political issues that brought about the situation of imprisonment. In this aspect, the slight experience in union or social participation of some of the prisoners did not allow them to become aware of this possibility.

In our work, trust is of utmost importance and it was not an easy task to establish relationships of trust with those who felt that they were being detained for political reasons. The non-successful requests to provincial officials made them distrust all those who came close to them.

E. Family and reflection groups that were carried out

As a social response to the crisis, solidarity first came forth from the *Commission of Women in the Fight of Las Heras* (Comisión de Mujeres en la Lucha de Las Heras), which had existed before and is a committed group in the social struggle of the region. Later on, the *Commission of the Relatives of Prisoners* (Comisión de Familiares de Presos) was established; while, in turn, the prisoners constituted the *Commission of Prisoners* (Comisión de Presos). This last commission also functioned as an articulation between the prisoners and their companions as well as a space of inter-mediation for the reception of material solidarity. The *Commission of Relatives* was in one city and the prisoners were scattered about. This in itself creates the basis of the need for organization. Solidarity is not only an organizing premise, but also a product of the joint tasks to solve a problem.

That is how the groups of relatives started to organize the marches that were carried out in Las Heras and at the Court Houses in Pico Truncado and Caleta Olivia, which reverberated all over the whole province. In these marches, the relatives vindicated the activity of those detained and claimed for their immediate release, as well as for the punishment of those who had tortured the prisoners.

Our proposal to carry out reflection groups had the objective of helping the people to discover the importance and sense of working together and to strengthen the functioning of the commission as well as give a space for the subjective development of the situation that they were living through.

The manner in which we conform ourselves as a group when faced with events of impunity is of fundamental importance, and these can be modified due to the force acquired by the contact, communication and sharing of the professionals, those affected, their relatives and the community.

First group approach with a commission of relatives:

The first reflection group carried out with the relatives of those detained was carried out the 8th and 9th of April, 2006, in the city of Las Heras. A great many relatives participated in this meeting: mothers and fathers, wives and siblings among others, (the majority of those present belonged to the Commission of Women Fighting in Las Heras). These first meetings helped some relatives to gather with other relatives for the first time; others had seen, but had never spoken to each other. These meetings were intense; and at moments, cathartic, as some relatives would lash out their anger and

anxieties. As had happened with the prisoners, we had to go through an initial period of distrust.

Among the issues brought forth, the most pressing ones were those of economic difficulties, the long distances to the places of detention, the prejudices and the fear in the rest of the population – that was still fearful due to the presence of the Border Guards, and the abuse and threats of the local police – ; the anger and impotence at being inspected or searched when the wives and mothers of those detained went to visit them, since these moments were humiliating and abusive.

The issues circulating in the group were the following:

- a) Repression when they gathered: being followed, telephones bugged, threats.
- b) Narration of the situations of torture to the prisoners: beatings, threats of being thrown out of the vehicles (during their trips to the prison of Deseado some 400 kms from Las Heras). Threats that they were going to rape the wives. Humiliating treatment such as making them take their clothes off and photographing them.
- c) What to tell their children about the situation of their fathers? Some tell the truth, others don't. Some only tell their older children the truth. All the women say that they find it difficult to talk about this subject.
- d) Difficulties to maintain the group of women together, given the multiple interests at stake and the divisionist policies implemented from those in power.
- e) Expectations in reference to the future of the situation. An illusion that the period of detention would be brief, but something far from reality given the grave situation of events. When talking about this subject, depressive lived experiences emerge.
- f) The suicides in Las Heras. It has been commented that it is the city with the greatest percentage of suicides: everybody knew someone who had committed suicide. This issue was very present during the whole meeting. Perhaps the fear that one of those detained would kill himself?

All these subjects were worked on during the group meetings. Having been able to establish an interdisciplinary and professional working group helped both the families and those detained to be able to talk about their

worries, comment about the things that bothered them, anger, indignation, anguish, and burdens, both emotional and economic.

All this also contributed to help the families and community feel accompanied and contained so that they could continue working, gathering together and trying to propose some activity to carry out.

The interview with the judge assigned to the case, perhaps for those affected and their families, was one of the greatest achievements the group managed to obtain during the process of the elaboration of the traumatic situation. This interview had been organized beforehand. At a meeting the previous day at the parish of Las Heras, we thought over the petition and the need to transmit all the concerns with respect to the detainments and the cases to the judge. On the day of the interview, which was conceded to two of the professionals, we were able to include a lawyer from Liberpueblo as well as the parish priest in the first meeting, although this particularly did not find favor with the judge, while we continued to claim that all the families should be present. After listening to the judge, we stated our claims in reference to the situation:

- If the police accused of torture and ill treatment were still free although a denouncement had been presented against them, then it was not just for those who were detained to be in prison without a denouncement on charges of murder, as they wanted to accuse them. The judge was requested to quickly release the prisoners until the trial began, as their detention did not correspond after more than two years had elapsed without a firm sentence.
- To request that those detained for this case be considered political prisoners and not common prisoners.

We insisted upon the importance of letting all the families attend the meeting, and after several hesitations, the judge decided to see each family separately. While this was happening, the Team was waiting outside the Judge's chamber together with the rest of the families, trying to maintain contact and inform the media of the region as to what was happening.

Once more we were able to prove that the presence of health professionals in the provinces allows spaces to be opened on the radio, in writing and even on television – a situation that is unthinkable in the Capital city.

On leaving the court, on the request of one of the relatives, we took a photograph of the group that had participated in this activity, in an environment of happiness shared by all in the developed task.



F. Some difficulties that arose during the task

The need to construe a relationship based on trust – which is common practice of any professional approach case – acquires a particular importance in these cases. It is natural for those detained to be mistrustful of unknown people that have come from another part of the country and who say they are interested in their situation. That is why we made a real effort to maintain the continuity of the professionals that participated in this task, as well as continue the relationship beyond our trips, through telephone calls from the Federal Capital.

In the building up of this trust, it was fundamental to be as sincere as possible with respect to the real possibility of being able to influence the judicial system to modify the situation of their privation of freedom – and for this reason, we avoided generating expectations that were overly optimistic.

After some time, our visits became valued and even expected. We became an important reference of support for them. And also, at times we became the receivers of their anxiety and anger that were generated by their

situation of imprisonment. They made this known through comments like Do you know what it is like to be in here? I'd like to see you here, having to go to sleep with people you don't want to go to sleep with.

It is important to point out that although a positive transference relationship was what allowed us to carry out a psychosocial approach, the transference was not always positive.

G. Problems within our own Team

For three years we worked on the need to reflect on a group level and to elaborate some lived experiences, of impotence as well as omnipotence, that arose within our Team when faced with the concrete and complex situations that presented themselves during the development of our work.

On different occasions, the Team talked about the follow-up of the task and the subjective vicissitudes that were present. In this sense, team work becomes an indispensable support for the professionals involved: to know that we are part of a greater team contained and sustained us throughout our task.

During the process we asked ourselves about the pertinence and usefulness of our actions. For us, it was an enormous effort of time, money and commitment to give continuity to the task. And meanwhile, the prisoners continued to be detained for three years. We asked ourselves if the detained people and their families felt that our presence was a real support or if it was only a spasmodic and an effort of voluntarism, which appeased our desire of being useful to those that suffered repression. Those imprisoned and their families were in charge of transmitting to us that our presence was important to them. This sustained us not only in the awareness of the necessity to continue, but also in the desire, to do so.

In Argentina, there is a social practice of memory construction, so that when confronted with events of a social character, those affected and/or their families gather together to claim and mutually support themselves. In our experience, this type of gathering together was frequently of great importance to process the traumatic situations of social origin. With all the conflicts and differences that this might involve, it is precisely in these situations that we have chosen to insert ourselves in order to collaborate in the psycho-social processing.

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REFLECTION GROUPS. Elaboration of Social Trauma

Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon

Multipersonal mechanisms, in particular group mechanisms, constitute a privileged tool for working with subjectivity, in cases of traumatic situations of social origin, since it helps to alleviate the suffering and to carry out an elaborative work on the effects of the traumatic impact.

Basically, we are convoked or we convoke the people to carry out reflection groups with those directly affected and with persons who work with them. This division is not perfect as, sometimes, it is the affected people themselves who carry out work with others. On some occasions it is about elaborating particular situations included in the traumatic situation, as for example problems associated to motherhood or fatherhood. We also work with people that collaborate in social groups related to Human Rights borderline problems, which affect them in some manner.

The people come to the group, not to generally comprehend the vicissitudes of the subjectivity of the epoch, but rather to understand that which they feel as an obstacle in their lives, something that produces desolation and sorrow, that affects their interpersonal relationships and/or hinders the carrying out of the work which they have sought to do.

Social groups to which these people spontaneously turn to as a resource in times of crisis constitute one of the fundamental instruments to help the subject, who feels defenceless, and to offer him the needed support. They are a sort of prosthesis. Besides containing – if they are groups in which support predominates over the hiatus – they perform changeable functions in the sense of functioning as a new matrix for the development of aspects of the psyche.

There is broad experience in the construction of group mechanisms, expressly constituted for the subjective work in relation to traumas of social origin, which have shown to be the ideal instrument – independently of the diversity of techniques and concepts. In the earthquakes in Mexico and Honduras, in different traumatic situations that came about as a consequence of World War II as well as other local wars; in Argentina, in the case

of the political repression of the military dictatorship, the bombing of the AMIA, Cromagnon, the floods in Santa Fe, etc., group approaches were implemented for subjective elaboration.

It should be remembered that the founding support of Bion on psychoanalytical work with groups is based on his experience in the rehabilitation of war veterans.

About social trauma

Traumatic situations produce immediate effects and also effects in the long term. The affectation includes the persistence of something not metabolized in the psyche.

The lived experience of loss (both real and felt) determine a marked before and after the traumatic event, that always includes feelings of defencelessness and abandonment and the putting at risk of the narcissistic value.

And although in all traumas there is a social component, we are referring to a traumatic situation of social origin, differentiating it from an isolated traumatic event, to point out that it implies a complex phenomenon in the coming together of different variables and with persistent action over a certain period of time.

While an isolated event can be considered an accident suffered by one or several people, in the case of traumatic situations of social origin, it is a social group, i.e., the members of a community who are involved in the traumatic situation and present some degree of affectation, which brings about specific characteristics in each individual.

When a person suffers an accident at their home, and even though what is social is included within that house where the accident occurred, or in the reading the subject will make of that event, what is fundamental of the situation will be given by the trauma and by the structure of the personality of the subject who suffered the trauma.

Another similar situation is that of a person who has been diagnosed with cancer and who although has been evolving very well, acquires traumatic characteristics and so begins to organize his psychic life around the health-illness axis and falls into a psychic state of evident connection to the trauma. In this case, the social representation of cancer as equivalent to death plays an important role.

But situations like Cromagnon, the Airbus that recently fell into the ocean, a tsunami, the floods in the city of Santa Fe, all have a certain social

character as a fundamental feature and this is why their impact on collective subjectivity is so great.

Even more complex and over-reaching is the social trauma produced by macro power, which implies a voluntary decision over sectors of society – which in our country occurred with State terrorism.

In these cases, the trauma is associated to one or several losses that are so grave that they put at risk the maintenance of continuity in itself. Therefore, the traumatic situation, the trauma, loss and bereavement constitute an almost indivisible process with multiple articulations.

The concept of trauma, as we pointed out, implies an excess of stimuli which the psyche does not manage to elaborate, and produces a disorganizing impact to psychic life. Symbolic archives are swept away.

As from Freud, who defined traumatic neurosis analyzing the effects of war, many authors place the centre on the magnitude of the traumatic stimulus, in relation to the disorganizing effect that it produces on the psyche.

Laplanche (1972), following Freud, defines traumatic neuroses as those in which the symptoms are consecutive to an emotional clash, and linked to a life-threatening situation or to the integrity of the subject, where the trauma has a determining part in the content of the symptoms (nightmares, mental repetition of the traumatic event, reaction of automatic anguish with somatic and neurovegetative effects: palpitations, sweating, difficulty in breathing, colics, etc.).

It is important to point out that in the concept of trauma, besides the traumatic event per se and the psychological conditions of the subject, the affective situation intervenes, understanding by this the social circumstances and the demands of the moment.

Some authors, and in our country Silvia Bleichmar (2000), consider that what is traumatic is at the same time, constitutive and constituent of psychic functioning; and as from the necessity of the psyche to elaborate the external and internal stimuli that it receives, complexity and evolution are produced.

We start off with a vision of the psyche as an open system in which there are complexing experiences that modify the psychic functioning of a person through out all his life. In this sense, trauma (as a disorganizer) and the modes of its elaboration can produce psychic consequences of certain stability in different directions, which modify structure and function³.

³ We develop the concept of the open psyche in the article “Subjectivity and Psychism”.

When the ego is already constituted, a trauma operates as a stone thrown violently that takes with it all the previous modalities of functioning of psychic life. It can modify previous structures, it can do away with part or all of the ego. When the function of paraexcitement of the preconscious is not sufficient to stop this taking away, the trauma is effective and the work of the preconscious is partially or totally broken down. Then, those excesses of stimuli which have not been metabolized, which have not been transcribed, will persist as traumatic remains.

We differentiate the traumatic situation from the effective trauma so as to account for the fact that people have a very broad spectrum of possibilities as responses. In all these cases, the subjective impact is very strong, but the defences that are implemented in the response can be adequate or archaic, in a broad spectrum, and in consequence, the ego is preserved in relative degrees.

In the traumatic effect there remains a remnant of anguish which cannot be symbolized, it is not representable by means of words.

As we have pointed out, automatic anguish overwhelms the preconscious and the ego. A narcissistic regression is produced that prevents the subject from implementing efficient defences, of a neurotic nature, as occurs in the case in which anguish functions as a sign anguish. These moments can be considered psychotic moments in which an ego capable of establishing a command does not exist, i.e., one that implements adequate measures to exercise some sort of protection over the subject. Sometimes archaic defence mechanisms are implemented.

When the floods in the province of Santa Fe occurred, a group of people were taken out of their home in a boat. One of the women was carrying a baby in her arms and she wasn't able to keep the baby from falling into the water. Later, several of the people in the boat said that the baby had fallen out of their arms not the mother's.

In this traumatic situation a narcissistic regression is produced in each one of the persons and this implies a loss of ego / no-ego discrimination as well as the inside-outside discrimination, with the putting into action of the most archaic mechanisms of fusion.

There are numerous examples of how traumatic stimuli reappear in a repetitious manner: Primo Levi (1987) describes how, once liberated and back in his house in Turin, he kept on walking looking at the floor for many months, which is what he used to do in the concentration camp in hopes of finding some forgotten piece of food or some object that might become valuable.

Alfredo Bravo, who was abducted and tortured during the military dictatorship, said he could not tolerate going to the movies, since listening to noises in the darkness made him go back to the moments of his torture sessions.

A person who had lost the notion of time due to the torture he had undergone and thought that he was going to die of thirst (people who are tortured with electricity are not given water to drink), for many years needed to have a glass of water available.

As we have highlighted, trauma affects the psyche and simultaneously it is works in the plane of subjectivity.

We conceive subjectivity and its production as the different modes of giving meaning to the world, the different ways of perceiving, thinking and feeling; the different ways of existence and of life. Subjectivity is a historic-social production. It does not have a nature in itself, inside the subject or the essence of the subject. As a historic and social construction, subjectivity is a formation that simultaneously corresponds to the unique subject and to the group. We associate this concept to what Kaës defines as the interpretative component of what is subjective and inter and trans-subjectivity.

The problems of the elaboration of trauma are very especially linked to the sense that this acquires for each person and to the possibility of finding and maintaining adequate support for the psyche. However, both the individual sense of the trauma as well as the possibility of maintaining or obtaining adequate support – especially when dealing with a social trauma – are linked to the collective processing of the traumatic situation.

In accordance to our concept of trauma, the following factors must exist: a relationship of interiority between causal factors, the previous conformation of personality, the relationship situation, the process of traumatization, the group support which the subject counts on, identifying models, the discourse and the systems of hegemonic collective ideals, psychological effects, the possibility of personal and social elaboration of the affection due to trauma and the phenomena of retraumatization.

Besides the fortitude of the ego and of the previous conditions of personality – factors which are undoubtedly important – the comprehension of the situation, the previous ideological position, the feeling of belonging to a group on the social plane which shares a project are all things that are important in terms of the incidence to the traumatic situation in the subjectivity and to the possibility of personal preservation.

World War II veterans in the United States received social recognition

which implied a symbolic reparation and generated favorable conditions for the elaboration of the individual trauma. Its action during the war could have one reading, a putting into sense both on a social and personal level. In contrast, the Vietnam or Iraq veterans, in a situation of social repulsion to their acts, did not count with the needed support for the elaborative work and faced with the anguish of non-assignation, they frequently resorted to senseless acts of violence.

The case of the Malvinas veterans, in which there was no official recognition, plus the lack of economic reparation, has been shocking and lamentable due to the percentage of suicides.

The dictatorship produced a traumatic effect on the collective and personal plane, of different degrees of affectation. The existence of thousands of missing-detainees accompanied by an official discourse of denial, is a paradigmatic expression of trauma which produces de-structuring effects. It is worthwhile to point out the influence that the dominating discourse has in subjectivity, which gives specific sense and significance to social phenomena.

Torture is one of the most severe traumatizing factors, and in the case of the dictatorship, we know that it was applied systematically to the people who were detained. Many of the people who were not included in the definite lists of those that disappeared are currently witnesses in the trials against the genocidaires.

We are in agreement with the definition of torture established by the United Nations, which includes cruel, degrading and humiliating treatment. The conditions of detainment during the military dictatorship in Argentina, especially in reference to those people who were missing-detainees, constituted a part of that torture.

Primo Levi, in a personal communication to Ian Thomson (2007), referring to the effect of nudity in the Lager, stated: "Clothes are a sign of humanity".

A female patient tells of having been interrogated while sitting naked next to another male prisoner and feeling this situation as one of the most traumatic situations of her life – since her nudity had been lived as a degradation.

In this manner those that were tortured felt that the lived experience of dignity was affected, the feeling of belonging to what is "human". Going back to Primo Levi, Agamben (2000) analyses in detail the relationship between what is human and what is subhuman, the limits of what is human.

Self-esteem is compromised in traumatic situations, especially by the response or by the difficulty of response of the subject. In the work of all bereavement there is a moment of questioning of the behavior of the subject. Feelings of guilt come forth, since the person feels that he should have done something differently from what he actually did so that he would not have been reached by the trauma. And to this are added the guilt-ridden social discourses.

On the other hand, the chosen behavior comes into question once the traumatic episode is unleashed. When the mother of a missing-detainee was abducted for a month, she did not accept to be called “flaca” [a common and affectionate nickname used only by those close to the person]. She considered it was an act of personal dignity not to answer when called in this manner.

The traumatizing experience of the dictatorship has found multiple paths of collective elaboration in permanent comings and goings with personal elaboration. Commemorations, commemorative pavement tiles, social actions, cultural production through films, painting, theatre and music are forms of this elaborative process. However, there is something of what is traumatic that requires a specificity in its approach.

Over many years of work, we have been able to prove the role of group mechanisms as privileged mechanisms for the approach to these problems.

Group mechanisms

Previously we pointed out that from the traumatic experiences there is an aspect that cannot be put into words, something that might be kept silent forever. The telling of a traumatic experience implies a certain degree of elaboration; it is an evocation of the situation that uses words. However, there is something extra, which is the traumatic remains, which is not expressed in words but rather in gestures, in body language, in acting.

In ancient Greece theatre was used, the acting of drama on the stage, as a mode of elaboration of the social traumatic situations and, more in general, of the great conflicts of man and culture.

People in many situations need to talk, to share lived experiences that are located in the adjacent areas of what is traumatic. This need may suddenly appear after a long time of silence.

Group mechanisms offer the possibility to contain and unite, both personally and collectively, the traumatic elements that were a disruptive factor in psychic reality.

By mechanism, we understand the group of normative conditions of the task to be developed: number of individuals, frequency and hour of the meetings, limited or unlimited duration of the functioning of the group, but more especially the meanings, the contents of the dramatic scene which one is working on, the constructions of sense that are produced and the type of interventions pertinent to this work of the coordinators of the group. According to whichever is the group mechanism, the emergence of determined productions will be favoured.

In this work, we are interested in specifying in which manner the reflection groups operate in relation to the elaboration of traumatic situations of social origin.

The authors who worked on the problems of the groups, as from different models of concepts, coincide in pointing out that two planes of functioning exist: one of them is the manifest task which the group proposes to work with and the other is the imaginary life that assists or obstructs the carrying out of this task.

The mechanisms which we work with have the following characteristics:

- They are open groups, of voluntary attendance, without limitation to the number of participants, organized in modules according to a previously agreed number of meetings. These modules can be re-contracted.
- The idea is to talk spontaneously about any subject that arises. The mode of work is established, within a framework, with the adult aspects of the members of the group.
- Within the intersubjective work, a permanent movement is produced between a regressive level – in which what is fantasy circulates – and a regressive level, one of concepts, one that uses symbolic language, which tries to understand what is happening in the imaginary lives of the group, and to construct new sense and significations in an elaborative work. The group task is defined by this proposal of comprehension. Between these two modes of group functioning there are discontinuities and alternatives.
- The group task includes contents and discursive modalities. But fundamentally it is about a mechanism in which a spontaneous dramatization is produced. The group “is a dramatic scene”. When we refer to spontaneous dramatization we are not referring to the implementation of a technique. We are placing ourselves in what

appears to be a dilemma: What to give priority to in a group? To what one hears – so that if we close our eyes and omit the tones we could put together only one interpretable discourse or several – or, as we prefer to do, to what appears before our eyes as a scene – a dramatic scene – . In this scene the characters speak, i.e., there are discourses, but they are also located in space, they establish temporal dimensions, of continuity; they have gestures, rhythm, looks, postural attitudes of closeness or distance; between them all, they build one skin, one body. A setting in scene and in word is produced, and a structure of roles is constructed as from the circulation of different types of fantasies – which have to be simultaneously seen and heard.

- The reflection group allows multiple access: to the group formations of the psyche originated in primary relationships, to the inter and transsubjective processes, and to the modes in which these phenomena are intertwined, articulated or inscribed within the institutional variables and what is macro-contextual.
- A trustworthy and intimate plot is organized which allows the work of subjectivity.

Let us look closer at how the different planes of the linking plot are manifested in the reflection groups:

- On the one hand they present merging aspects, indiscriminate of the relationship. In these what can predominate is a lived experience of plenitude, of narcissistic expansion, inherent to the group illusion, or the bureaucratic crystallization which corresponds to the sustaining of a merging relationship accompanied by subjective lived experiences that can be pleasant or unpleasant. In both cases it is about syncretic aspects deposited in the framework, with adhesive and omnipotent identifications.
- This level, which corresponds to the putting into circulation of the original fantasies, is a necessary condition for the constitution of the imaginary of the group. In each subject, it corresponds to the narcissistic formations which contribute to organize a joint matrix and are the basis of the feeling of belonging to the group on the part of each one of the members of the group.
- This is the “regressive” pole of transsubjectivity. Transsubjectivity understood as that which corresponds to the maximum opening of the partially abolished subjectivities due to the absence of a space of transcription or of differentiation.

- Another pole of transsubjectivity is given by the psychic inscription of the order of the culture, in its diverse dimensions. The socio-cultural organizers, like institutional variables, social representations or identifying statements, bearers of the social ideals of each period, which go through the members of the group, are part of the aspects of culture that give structure to subjectivity and are manifested in the construction of the group. This is another level of the constitution of social belonging, which sustains the affirmation that every subject is subject of a culture.
- On the other hand, within the group, intersubjectivity is put into play which is understood to be a relationship phenomenon that implies a manifest and conscious aspect as well as an unconscious aspect in which the mutual depositing of the parts of each one in the other or others is present, a translation and metabolization of the message of the other modified in the passing into the interior of each subject in accordance to his/her unconscious problems (process of transcription). This intersubjective movement is manifested in the group through the configuration of a structure of roles of mutual attributions according to the mode of articulation of the different fantasies.
- In the work of intersubjectivity and in the transsubjective aspects, even when we do not specifically refer to them in our interventions, they are present in the structure of the personality and history of the subject, which include the identifying processes and products, especially the secondary identifications and those corresponding to the ideal ego, as well as the secondary fantasies, inherent to each subject.

Interventions

As in any group, we foster network communication, trying to avoid radio communication which intensifies the dependence with respect to the coordinator. The coordinators have different types of interventions: interpretations, clarifications of problems, questions and pointing out certain ideas/concepts.

However, there is a plus in the interventions that are impossible to catalogue or prescribe. It depends on the subjectivity of the coordinator and of the relationship that has been set up. This plus includes attitudes, gestures, modes of greeting, inclusion or not inclusion in the commentaries. In this there is something of that which was described as the art of curing, which

in medicine not only had to do with aspects that are still unknown of some diseases, but also with transference aspects in the doctor-patient relationship, that includes, of course, the personality of the doctor. The idea of art is related, on the other hand, to that which is creative that is going to be developed in the group.

Some interventions of the coordinators try to clarify conflictive situations. Others are directed to showing, as from what has been raised by the members of the group, different repertoires of possible responses when faced with the same problem.

When the level of idealized demands – deposited in the figure and the function of the coordinator – becomes an obstacle for the exchange, we have interventions whose purpose is to decrease this obstacle. We avoid taking on the function of a judge which they try to place us in, by not qualifying behaviours as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate.

Different levels of fantasies, pacts and agreements are interpreted, trying to avoid the interpretations linked to the personal history of the members, trying to direct everything, instead, to transsubjective levels (and at times intersubjective levels). A very important aspect is to try to help to discover in what manner the social representations are articulated with the subjective lived experiences. If we conceive the elaboration of what is traumatic as a process that is simultaneously individual and social, it is obvious to point out that many of the interventions which show this articulation are lived by the members of the group as a relief to their feelings of guilt, as something reparatory to their self-esteem.

We also tend to establish a relationship between determined affections and ideas, conscious or not, on which they sustain themselves, as well as the unconscious motivations of certain attitudes.

In some of these groups, we point out the relationship between the institutional norms and subjectivity or the relationship between institutional norms and interpersonal relationships.

In the groups, the interpretative function does not only pertain to the therapist or coordinator. The members of the group can take on this function, and do so sometimes with incredible insight. Sometimes conflicts are dramatized within the institution. The bottom level of sincretic sociability simultaneously favours and obstructs individuation.

To give the devolution or not on the part of the coordinators at the end of a meeting is something open in our practice. The devolution produces an effect of re-establishing a skin over the group. This would be a contribution

of the coordinators to the work of linking, to the recomposition of an image of totality when faced with the fragmentation and the eruption which what is traumatic tends to produce. It has a unifying effect and, in this sense, it reduces anguish. It may be necessary or not.

Intervention or interpretation can produce effects of an opening or of a seam. A seaming intervention can be linked to a counter-transfereñcial lived experience of the threat of the breaking up of the group.

In all these cases, it is indispensable to work with the phenomena of implication and counter-transference.

Co-coordination is important, if it is possible. This facilitates placing an instrumental distance which enables to preserve the capacity to think. The advantages of co-coordination are applicable to any mechanism of group work, since the coordinator must deal with multiple variables and especially, with the transferences and with the “group effect”, which is given by the demands that arise from regression. To this one must add the emotional impact which the traumatic situations also produce in the coordinators.

When co-coordination is being carried out, the analysis of the inter-transference allows one to better comprehend the group process.

As we have already pointed out, the traumatic situation has a devastating effect on the stability of certain psychic defences, that is to say, it places the subject in a critical situation. The work in the reflection group implies a movement of regression - progression, de-structuring - re-structuring, de-identifications – re-identifications. It is precisely due to this movement that new inscriptions can be produced in the psyche. Let us go back again, in this sense, to the expression of varied effect of Diana Singer (1996) as the complement of the varied effect of the group. Which are the processes that are put into play in the reflection group in order to facilitate these effects?

- The group harbours, or houses the aspects of the subject in situations of suffering, of defencelessness. The group imaginary construction and, in it, the other participants, can contain the anguish of the subject. Recovering the concept of Bion concerning the capacity of reverie of the mother, who contains the anguish and terrors of the child giving them a meaning that can make them thinkable, Hugo Bleichmar (1997) states this subject in two different phases: first, the mother identifies with what the child is feeling, and then gives it back to the child transformed into something which has a meaning and she takes

him out of the terror without name (Nachin, 1995).

- The group, as a metaphor of the mother-child cell, fulfills that function.
- A matrix is constructed for the work of symbolization and for the ligature or absorption of the traumatic remains. Intersubjective work allows the lending of the preconscious to be carried out. In agreement with Kaës (1996), we consider that the activity of the preconscious is always involved in traumatic experiences, whether due to a fault or to insufficiency. In this situation, complex functions of the preconscious are paralyzed, as those which are in latency, anticipation, metabolization, regulation of instincts and the putting into a representation of words.

Precisely because the preconscious is a product of inter-subjectivity, in the group situation the putting into words of the other, due to the work of his preconscious, gives conditions to each one of the subjects for the reactivation of the activity of symbolization. One or others can carry out for the subject, under certain conditions, the work of linking and of transformation which is momentarily inaccessible to him.

States Kaës, in reference to the definition of the meta-preconscious of the other: “I remind you of my initial hypothesis: the quality of the activity of the preconscious must be considered as an intersubjective function. I will specify this through its corollary: the capacity of lodging, of containment, of signification and of transformation/interpretation that characterizes the activity of the preconscious has, as a condition, some qualities of the preconscious of the others. This supposes that a “meta-preconscious” function is already constituted and available in at least one other subject for another subject” (Kaës, 1996:97).

We could think that, in this manner, within the group a jigsaw puzzle is being assembled by combining different pieces contributed by the preconscious of each one of its members. The definition of puzzle includes the existence of an enigma to solve and the assembling of the different parts for the solution. This process is simultaneously collective and individual because at the same time that there is an elaboration of the group, a work of linking at the individual level is being produced. Confronted with the fragmentation, the tendency to burst which is produced by the trauma, this work – in which all have contributed with their preconscious – constructs unified images.

- We use the concept of preconscious inscribed in the second topic, as an aspect of the ego: “The second theory of the psychic apparatus links the processes and contents of the preconscious at the instance of the Ego. There the preconscious can be situated as the place of the inscriptions of language, of storage, of psychic assembly whose origins are found in the verbal learning of the subject. In a more general mode, the function of the preconscious is that of conserving for the Ego, a certain number of behaviours which the subject has adopted by identification of the objects, de-sexualizing them. The function of the preconscious is fundamental in sublime activity; it places pre-existing forms at the disposal of the subject which will allow him to deviate the target to the service of the activity of the Ego” (Kaës, 1996:89).
- We acknowledge points of contact with the development of Hugo Bleichmar, who situates the Ego as the main place of these problems.
In the people who have suffered a traumatic situation, there may be a persistent action of what is thanatic, which paralyzes them, overwhelms them and takes away their vitality.
- The group process can contribute the transmission of an energy that enables the emergence of desire. The effect of the activity of the other(s) can be registered not only as a representation, as a memory, but as a function, as a capacity to execute activity.
- The reflection group also gives a new space for re-support when faced with defencelessness and lived experiences of fragmentation or mutilation, produced by the different types of loss. This sustainment reinforces the support already given by the spontaneous grouping, if it exists. Working on what is to come about between what is fusional and what is discriminatory, the support includes, besides sustainment, the possibility of a creative work of remodelization⁴.

⁴ The concept of psychic sustainment was taken from Freud and re-worked by René Kaës (1976): “*Together with the support of the psyche on corporal biophysiological functions, there is a support of psychic formations on the group and on the institutions, particularly and in the first instance on its representatives and its most immediate forms loaded with significations: family, mother*”. It contains a triple signification: support, model and opportunity or open crack. The idea of support or sustainment implies that one of the terms bears the other. That is to

- It allows, on the other hand, a specific elaboration of the problems of self-esteem, affected by the situation of disaster and by the identification with the external and internal discourses that distribute guilt. Self-esteem is from the beginning, a creation produced in the intersubjective relationship, therefore the role of the other is decisive. In this sense, there is no assured narcissism, rather what occurs is that self-esteem starts to be constructed by the internalization of that relationship and by the vision of the other, which later will be a vision that comes from within and contemplates the subject and defines values.
- The reflection group fulfills equivalent intersubjective functions which contribute to the restitution of the self-esteem which had been affected.
- The work of elaboration constructs sense in relation to the occurred events. It is a work of historization which allows one to discover the signification of the dominant discourses and the social representation

say, something that threatens to fall, claims for consolidation or reinforcement. It is about a system of multiple and mutual support, of a network of solidarity that includes the body, the maternal and paternal functions, groups, institutions and, through them, what is social as a whole. This multiple sustainment implies the permanent presence of a movement, a movement of support and non-support.

The idea of model has to do with the fact that in the relationship with the structure of support, the psyche is modeling itself, i.e., it intervenes in the identifying process. The notion of opportunity or open crack indicates both the limit and contingency between what is supporting and what is supported. That is to say, that the elements which are in support are at the same time separated and open in one of its phases. This idea can find its equivalent in Winnicott's concept of transitional space. This space is the one which allows phenomena of transcription and creativity. It is in situations of crisis where the characteristics of sustainment are put into evidence with greater clarity. A crisis implies a loss, a lack, a rupture in relation to the supports with which the psyche counts on. The experience of rupture, both in the continuity of the self itself and in the continuity of the relationships with objects implies, from the point of view of sustainment, the possibility of following different paths:

- The suturing or reduction of the transitional space.
- The existence of an empty space, that is to say, an exaggerated distance in the system of mutual solidarities.
- The creation of a transitional space that allows creativity and in which the processes of transcription are produced.

So, to solve the crises, and very particularly those produced by traumatic situations of social origin, it is necessary to establish the conditions of psychic work at the group level. In this manner, the group, which is used spontaneously as a resource during the crisis (the classic example being that of adolescence), in which a rupture is produced in the continuity of psychosocial relationships, is also a privileged instrument for therapeutic work in these situations.

that these construe, as well as the analysis of the counter-hegemonic practices and social representations. Within the group the articulation between social representations and fantasies is especially worked, since social representations are efficient because they support and inscribe fantasies within themselves, especially those fantasies which correspond to the order of what is transubjective.

- In traumatic situations of social origin, finding the sense of the trauma is especially important for its elaboration. The spontaneous social groups that are formed to confront them carry out a very important role in the production of sense. They perform a work of semantization that helps not only to comprehend the social content of the problem but also the personal process of symbolization.
- The finding of significations and sense is so important that when social disasters occur in which they are disguised, the personal elaboration of the bereavement and the processing of what is traumatic are much more difficult.
- The comprehension of the why of the missing-detainees, for example, is more accessible than the why of trigger-happy cases or those of Cromagnon.
- Returning to the reflection group and to the work of historization, we have been able to observe the importance that the personal testimony of the trauma acquires for the person declaring as well as for the other members of the group.
- To give testimony, to speak in front of another person, generates a symbolic universe, it implies a passage from the unique subject to the social scene⁵.
- Personal, group and social historization help to produce redefinitions of identity, since personal identity is always sustained in the relationship with groups and institutions of belonging.
- The putting into action of the group is the necessary vehicle so as to be able to mobilize de-alienating forces. Alienation is, par excellence, a psychosocial phenomenon. According to PieraAulagnier (1977): "If

⁵ It is incredible how some people who give testimony in the trials against the repressors can say "after so much silence", when in reality they spoke many times the same things which they are now declaring. We think that the fact that there is another person who is listening allows some level of linking. The Court is the concrete representation of the State, of course, so it has certain characteristics as would the person who is listening. We think that something similar happens in the groups.

alienation is, by definition, unnoticed by the alienated subject himself, it will then be necessary for there to be others to put the process of de-alienation into action” (Page 47). And there will also be others, who will not participate in a direct manner in these actions. We consider that social practice is that which mainly produces de-alienation. This is applied not only to those that participate in a direct manner in their actions, but also to those who can take them as references and identify themselves with the models and ideas which are proposed.

- The reflection group can broaden and deepen this process. Within the group framework certain situations are produced, such as: pacts and agreements, either conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit – some of them are founding and will have an organizing role in the group and will mark the manner of acting, relationships, positions of each one of the members in relation to the other members, and of that group in relation to the other groups and with the social body⁶.

⁶ Every group is constituted upon founding pacts which determine the characteristics that the group will have. These pacts can be explicit or implicit. Sometimes there is an explicit agreement and surrogated pacts that determine the mode in which the explicit agreement will be carried out. The surrogated pacts may have never been verbalized. But the belonging to this group obliges one to fulfill them. The pacts define a shared field by what is positive, that is to say, that which its members must share, as well as a field of what must be kept outside so that the group can organize itself as such. These problems of the pacts and agreements are present in the conformation of every group, it is a structuring aspect of the group; but at the same time, when it functions more rigidly and becomes broader, they reduce the necessary distance for individualization. Let us see an example: a group in which its members voluntarily commit themselves to objectives of social struggle. This is an explicit agreement which will determine actions and relationships both in the intra-group as in other groups and the social body. Participation in this group and the attempt to comply with the explicit proposal will produce, in each member, the narcissistic gratification which comes from fulfilling that ideal. There will be a number of explicit, conscious and voluntary agreements that will guarantee the fulfillment of that objective. Yet the agreements do not stop there. Other pacts are produced simultaneously, which are not conscious but which are very effective in relation to the functioning of the group and to the demands which are imposed on its members. This same group can make a pact, which is not conscious, of obligation for all its members, which determines that the only possible activity and, in consequence, valued one, will be the one that has to do with the fulfillment of the tasks of that group. Therefore, it demands that its members do not develop any other kind of personal interest. There can also be another surrogate agreement which determines what is pertinent or not for the fulfillment of that objective. The problem lies with the rigidity with which these demands function and which put the phenomena of belonging and exclusion at stake. To be able to belong and be acknowledged as a

- Reflexive work approaches, visualizes and explicits these agreements, explicitation from which comes forth the possibility of putting them into question. These problems deserve special attention when the reflection groups are carried out with persons of the same institution – considered an institution in the broad sense – to a same preformed group.
- An us is constructed, the acknowledgement of a common problem and an alliance among the members is produced so as to approach the problem. This placing into a common group, which implies the construction of an anchorage, includes a differentiating tension in the here and now.
- Processes of recognition and differences are developed, as well as the capacity to understand and be understood by the other members. The others are simultaneously a mirror which reveals the similarities and the other who is different and who must be recognized.
- It is worth mentioning a problem that arises from the experience of these groups: when producing such a marked narcissistic affectation from the trauma, sometimes the differences in the affectation (for instance, in the case of Cromagnon, among the survivors and relatives of those dead, or in the case of the dictatorship among those imprisoned and those exiled) place the defensive stronghold at stake, and this appears in the form of a comparative scale of suffering which hinders the common reflexive work.
- Expliciting the problem, in many cases, helps to give continuity to shared group work. But in other cases, this difficulty has led us to form groups according to specific problems.

full member of the group, one must strictly comply with these pacts. The compliance or non-compliance of these pacts will lead to the acknowledgement or sanction (not always orally expressed, yet clearly perceptible) that the group will give to its members. In extreme cases, the relationship between individual and group interests acquires a virulent antagonism and exclusions are produced although these take on the form of voluntarily leaving, a product of a personal decision. In social groups brought about by traumatic situations of social origin, the existence of these pacts, and even their rigidity, can be the only guarantee of the subsistence of the group and the only possibility of fulfillment of the function for which the group was created. In this case there is an overlapping of the effect of the traumatic situation, which by producing so much helplessness makes the people look for complementation and suturing support within the group, in which the group body metaphorically, is lived as an extension of one's own body. Any fissure in the group body will imply a tear, a threat to the individual subject.

- The framework introduces, besides, organizing variables of time and space, basic ordering devices of psychic functioning, which are affected in traumatic situations.

In summary, reflection groups favour the elaboration of subjective lived experiences, of fantasies and of their relationship with social significations. It is a space of words that allows one to give singular and collective sense to the lived trauma, helping the subject to comprehend what he is going through, to discover the sense of emotions, affections and thoughts, to respond to and open queries and to decrease his suffering. To find what he has in common with, as well as what differentiates him from others. This subject places us, once again, in the complex framework where what is individual and what is social is articulated; the field of overlays and heterogeneities – a territory which is always fecund with queries and hypothesis.

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Cromagnon: A possible clinical and psychological approach

María Silvia Campos

The first difficulty that appears in this presentation is how to call, or what name do we give to this episode which is so complex Cromagnon. Whatever name it is given will locate positions, levels of different affectations, opposed interests. Massacre, murder, tragedy, accident are some forms of naming it yet none of them seem to take into account the totality of the universe of feelings that make up such an event. Each one of the terms refers to the place from where the person who names it is located. So we shall simply refer to this event as Cromagnon, so as to avoid belittling what it really means.

Something similar occurs when trying to give a term to those affected: victims, survivors, fathers, mothers, other relatives of the victims. Many questions arise not only from the denomination in itself, but from within the groups that we have accompanied: Are victims only those that died or also their closest loved ones? Are the survivors also victims? Many survivors refer to themselves as follows: *"I am a victim of Cromagnon"* yet at the same time, that which situates the person in relation to the traumatic event can coagulate the process of elaboration, if the person's identity is adhered only to that. For example, when the assistant to a reflection workshop presented herself, she said: *"I am a victim of Cromagnon"*, without mentioning her own name and as something which marks her identity as from what she has gone through. So, to avoid the possibility of victimization as from a term, we will refer to these people as "those affected".

Another question is: Who, precisely, are those affected? Are they only the ones that were more directly affected? The people who were there that night? Those who suffered the loss of a loved one? It is evident that the levels of affectation differ according to the closeness and particular place of each one in relation to the traumatic episode, yet something is certain: this has affected us as a society, affected all the Argentine people. We know very well that in these situations, of such a magnitude of trauma, different reactions at the individual and collective level appear. For instance, some

people show indifference which acts as a defence mechanism: *“That has nothing to do with me, that happened to others”*, and the denial of the empathetic component: *“It could have happened to me”*, and yet some prefer the isolation of the episode and never again talk about the subject – not even with friends who have shared the same experience – , while others convert the subject into the centre and sole motivating axis in their lives.

The universe of those affected that make up Cromagnon is not homogenous; there are many ideological and political differences, as well as opposed interests added to the different levels of affectation. Conflicts have been generated which separated a first group (quite massive) claiming for justice, thus creating several groups and ONGs with discrepancies of all types. For example, there are those who wanted the destitution of the Mayor of the City (Jefe de Gobierno) and those who did not; those who suspended their claims for justice after receiving a subsidy, those who are in favor of Callejeros (the rock group playing at the moment of the disaster) and those who are not; the groups confront each other according to their level of affectation: the parents of those that died vs. the parent of the survivors, etc. According to one survivor: *“I feel I don’t have a right to say what I am going through to X, who lost her son (the survivor’s boyfriend), because I am alive, nothing is comparable to what she is going through”*.

“We have to lie to the parents, we cannot tell them that we are going to see Callejeros again, because they feel it as a betrayal to their dead children”.

I need to get away from X’s mother (a friend who died), because I feel that she hates us because we are alive.

The population which we assisted in EATIP was and is, currently, mainly of adolescents who survived, some of whom lost someone close to them, and parents of the survivors.

Some forms of approach

- Presence at the self-convoked marches by those who suffered damage/ loss in their clamor for justice.
- Presence in the meetings of articulation where those directly affected, human rights and legal organizations participate. These meetings have been formed spontaneously as from the disaster and defined the formation of the different groups and ONGs.
- Attendance at the acts of the anniversaries.
- Participation at the different acts of homage, memory and justice.

- Assistance and accompanying of survivors and relatives of those that died, in oral and public trials.

The mechanism of assistance

Psychological assistance, and in some cases individual psychiatric assistance, as well as reflection group workshops with survivors and parents of the survivors.

As from our presence at the marches, at the meetings of articulation, etc., we began to receive requests for psychological assistance. This demand was produced for several reasons: the over-saturation of public services, the general disagreement (at not finding a satisfactory response to the specificity of the subject), and the distrust present due to a fantasy of the false use of medical histories.

Those who had private medical insurance also complained that they were not given the specific time and assistance needed. For example, a survivor who participated in a reflection group workshop felt that the first psychologist that assisted her at the psychiatric hospital (where she had had to be committed to for six months due to the trauma she had) made her evoke other traumas, which, in her, generated a situation that was more disorganizing every time (this person had had a psychotic outburst because of what happened at Cromagnon, with an important identity disorder). She would say: *“The psychologist would confuse me, she made me talk about things that I had already overcome and that made me feel worse...”*. This was re-traumatizing.

This is just an example of how an episode of these characteristics, where life is at stake, can destabilize a person and can have re-traumatizing effects: previous situations of life are re-updated, that might have seemed elaborated but in reality potentiate the current traumatic effect.

It is precisely for this reason that containment, trust, listening, and timing are so important, so necessary in all psycho-therapeutic treatments, and even more, in traumatic situations of this kind.

In another case, one could hear: *“I went to the therapist only once: she couldn’t listen to me, she would tell me; don’t go to the marches because you will feel worse, don’t go back to Cromagnon – but I needed to do those two things...”* or *“Well, you are alive, others died”*.

Here it seems that the intention of the therapist was that the person affected should not enter into contact with what, supposedly, could trau-

matize her even more. However, for some of those people it was very important to go back to the place of the disaster, after a long time of not having been able to do so, as part of the elaboration of the trauma and of the reconstruction of aspects of memory, linked to what had been lived, which were either blank or disconnected. On the other hand, going to the marches and sharing the struggle for justice with others also integrates this process of elaboration.

In reference to the last quote I wrote, it is probable that the intention was to connect the affected person with life. We are fully aware that one of the most frequent problems in these cases is the constant feeling of guilt for being alive. Moreover: the premise of guilt is inseparable from the logic sustained by those affected when they state: *"I am alive because others died"*.

In clinical work (both in group workshops and individual treatment) we frequently observe that the motive for consultation is associated to a series of symptoms which coincide with those of PTSD described in DSM IV. The first thing to point out in these types of events is that a person has been exposed to a situation of death or threat for his physical integrity as well as that of others. I will refer to one of the specific symptoms which coincides with the PD: *"Recurring thoughts about the traumatic episode, dreams, images, thoughts, perceptions. The individual acts or has the feeling that the traumatic event is occurring. Intense psychological discomfort and physiological responses when exposed to internal or external stimuli which symbolize or remind one of an aspect of the traumatic event"*.

In some cases this recurring appeared under the form of *"not being able to think of anything else"*. Not being able to forget what happened and some even said *"I don't want to forget it"*. A participant in one of the workshops said that all day long she listened to the music of Callejeros because, in that manner, she felt that she re-lived what had happened, she froze it at one particular moment and had the hope that it would have a happy ending. The problem is that it didn't have a happy ending. This is a clear example of trauma: that which is insistent without possibilities of linking, which indefinitely revives the traumatic situation without the possibility of exit or possible elaboration and leaves the subject in an eternal present of the trauma. Another survivor commented: *"That day in Cromagnon I lost my watch, it was 10:40 p.m. I never wore a watch again"*. A metaphorical example of how time was coagulated at that instant and of how something in that person was left trapped in there. Another person said: *"I feel kind of split, that a piece of me is missing, and I don't know where it is. I am*

missing me". Incapacity to remember an important aspect of the trauma.

A patient who was trying to write her declaration for the lawyer in her case, went back to having recurring dreams about what she had gone through. She could not finish writing as blanks appeared in her memory. What she was writing forced her to have contact with the traumatic scenes that were so hard for her to remember. Within the therapeutic context, she was accompanied along this situation. She would bring what she had written and read it, cry, interrupt herself, then came a period of silence until she could continue. It took her several months to write the whole episode and to reconstruct the lived event, to achieve that what appeared as fragmented, unconnected and with gaps in her memory be put into words – so that her own testimony and her truth about what had happened in Cromagnon could be told. Other problems which presented themselves, and in general, were associated, were:

- Decrease in the interest or participation in significant activities.
- Feeling of detachment in front of other people, incapacity to love.
- Feelings of a bleak future.
- Avoidance of stimuli associated to the trauma and torpor in the activity of the individual.
- Efforts to avoid activities, places, people that trigger memories of trauma.
- Special sensitivity to smells "of something burning" as well as to other smells that used to pass unnoticed before the event.
- Not being able to travel in a subway or bus nor stay in crowded place. Sensation of choking and asphyxia (reproduction of the real situation of asphyxia).
- Not being able to go for a long time to a (pop) concert, especially in a closed place – and when they manage to do so, not being able to enjoy the show because of being more concerned over the emergency exits and the other safety precautions of the place.
- Impossibility of taking up a job again and maintaining it after the episode, interruptions in studies and changes in professional choices.
- Difficulty in taking up affectionate relationships again – either as a partner or as a friend.
- Lack of projects and hopelessness in relation to the system of justice and to life in general.

We would like to point out some specific and recurring issues that we frequently hear in those affected:

Feelings of guilt for being alive, guilt of the survivor. Thoughts such as; “*I am alive because somebody else died*”. Some of those affected literally had to step over or on others in order to escape. I could have saved someone but I didn’t. This also generates among them a sort of category of braveness: “*How many did you save?*”, “*Where you able to save anyone else besides yourself?*”. There seems to be a hierarchy of pain, different categories according to the level of affectation. Is a parent more of a victim, does the parent of someone who died suffer more than a survivor? Surely the loss of a child is perhaps the most difficult situation to elaborate in one’s life, the problem arises when, faced with this, the silence of any other situation is produced.

Blaming the victim in different ways, from what is social and among the different groups of those affected: for example, towards the parents: “*How did you let your son go to that concert?* That reminds us, unfortunately, of other moments in Argentine history – as when during the military dictatorship – (Kordon and Edelman, 1983) where from the means of mass communication would come the question: “*Do you know what your son/daughter is doing at this very moment?*”. Blame, also, of some parents towards the survivor: “*Don’t complain because you are alive*”, or “*How can you enjoy going to another concert of Callejeros after what happened?*”. From the parents towards the surviving children: “*How could you go to that concert where everyone was drugged and drunk?*”

Feeling that, in life, there is *a before and an after Cromagnon*. In some cases there appears the necessity to get together to share their feelings with others who had lived through the same situation and/or to manifest themselves in marches clamoring for justice. Other people or groups of friends stopped talking about what happened with the illusion of forgetting what was traumatic. We observed that in those who kept silent and/or did not participate in the movement of struggle – in summary – those who turned away from all the problems of Cromagnon as a defensive strategy, the trauma can be re-updated at a later moment and in a much more violent manner. During the oral trial many of those affected went into crisis; some under the pressure to declare felt sick.

Although the granting of subsidies to those affected serves as an acknowledgement of the problem from the State, this generated several divisions, since it was not agreed upon within a legal framework and, in many cases, it tried to function as a mode of silencing or buying the will of those affected. Some, after receiving the subsidy (which is not a lifetime contribution or has yet to be concluded), abandoned the judicial cases or changed their denouncement.

We think that the possible forms of elaboration of what happened include, in those necessary cases, not only the possibility of working at the individual therapeutic level, but also in the different modes of collective elaboration which may include: groups of work, both reflection and therapeutic, or of another kind, where the experience of what has been lived is shared in common as are the collective forms of claiming for justice. Also, all the artistic and creative forms of transformation of what is traumatic and of psychic suffering can be important modes of elaboration.

We consider that the collective forms of claiming for justice are of vital importance, since placing responsibility and knowing who are the real responsible parties reduces one's feeling of guilt.

To be able to find a mode of elaboration for a traumatic event of social origin, it is fundamental for justice to function properly, and the manner in which something of this type is mobilized is, precisely, the struggle and clamor of the people.

We know that the only way in which something contained in what is traumatic can pass on to become a memory or something of the past – a healing wound, although it may leave a scar – is under the condition that justice be made. If not, the trauma and the past remain with an eternal character of presentness.

The oral trial which lasted a year and which sentences have just been ruled, has mobilized those affected in many ways: there were those who expected nothing from justice, with total hopelessness as well as those who expected very different outcomes. The trial showed the existence of different groups, who many times confronted each other in relation to who was situated as an enemy or as a responsible party. There were those that claimed that Callejeros were innocent; others claimed they were guilty. The mass means of communication were practically the only thing they spoke about, when the concern of many of the survivors was that the sentences ruled to the public officials were only minor, that impunity is maintained with respect to the system of the State, that some “scapegoat ” was punished “in order for everything to continue as always”.

In any case, let us think that it is inevitable that the claims for justice continue and that the trials must take place because they are of vital importance for the process of reparation to those affected and to the whole of society.

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Clinical practice with latin american refugees, construction of a practice

Noemí Sosa

Background of a professional practice

I am going to talk about my personal experience in the assistance to Latin American refugees over the last 30 years. After the coup in Chile against the government of Salvador Allende in 1973, our country – which was going through a democratic and particularly hopeful period – received a great number of people that came from this neighbouring country with open arms. Many of them were of Uruguayan nationality, who had sought asylum there due to the coup that had taken place in their country some years before. The majority, though, were Chilean who had been in many cases detained and tortured and who had later been taken out of the country thanks to the intervention of third countries. Some came by their own means, even crossing the Andes mountains on foot so as to be safe.

Up to that moment, Argentina had only granted asylum to people coming from Eastern European countries. International associations had given international legal protection to those who were escaping from the repression in Chile so that they would not be sent back there. Some institutions were formed in different cities in the country to receive these people and assist them. I had the opportunity to work in one of them: *Argentine Commission for Refugees* (CAREF) (Comisión Argentina para los Refugiados), in the city of Buenos Aires. At that time I was finishing my studies in psychology and I was part of a group of reception, assistance and accompanying. It was to be, without my being aware of it at the time, my initiation into the issues of mental health and human rights.

In that first group, we all did a bit of everything. From going to the airport to pick up people who were arriving by plane, that had left directly from the stadium in Santiago de Chile (centre of detention), to listening to the stories of the tortures they had undergone. We also had to go to some refugee centres in the middle of the night when there was a row between

some of the refugees (these were places where there were hundreds of people without any comforts) – all this was an everyday experience. We also organized the economic assistance for their subsistence. Most of us who were in the group of assistance were still students and we were mostly under 25.

Already in 1974, the task of accompanying refugees was considered dangerous, something that became much more dangerous after the 1976 coup. Those who had come seeking asylum and refuge again were in danger and had to go to other countries, and the paperwork for this could take months. Added to the anguish they had lived through in their own country was now the uncertainty of staying in Argentina without the necessary conditions of security, since the protection of the UNHCR was not enough. Accompanying the refugees had to be done in silence and in fear. The interdisciplinary groups that had been organized as from 1973 suffered threats, bomb attacks, raids and even persecution and exile, as was the case of one of the coordinators.

As from 1975, and greatly because we moved house, I participated in the tasks of another solidary association in the city of Mendoza: the Ecumenical Centre of Social Action (CEAS). Here the assistance was better organized, the participation of professionals dedicated to social work sustained and coordinated the different types of approach: legal, medical, of psychological assistance, etc. But the situation of the teams was as dangerous as the situation of those who they were assisting. We all shared uncertainty and fear, as parts of the same regional reality of State terrorism. In fact, the Centre suffered a bomb attack.

With democracy back in 1983, a new period in the subject of refugees started, since Argentina had adopted and signed several international conventions and treaties and became a country which granted asylum. It accepted people coming from different countries and, among them, of course, from Latin America. Since then, it is the Argentine State, through the National Commission for Refugees (CONARE), that grants refuge to those people that request it, after an evaluation that sometimes can go on for a couple of years.

In the eighties, the influx of Chilean refugees again increased with a new wave of people coming here, but this time it was people who were participating in the resistance to the military government through “protests” - as the demonstrations that began to develop in those years against Pinochet came to be known. I especially mention the Chileans because they constituted the majority, although an important group of Bolivian and Uruguayan refugees also came.

From 1983 onwards, then, it has been the Argentine State that grants refuge and guarantees that the person who manifests a founded fear of persecution due to political, racial or religious reasons will not be returned to his/her country.

On the other hand, this is the only thing the Argentine State grants. There are no resources for assistance or programmes for insertion into our society, so the refugees start to integrate the mass of poor people of our country. Sometimes they have some limited help from the funds of the UN-HCR, which sustains them for some months or for some special situation.

At this stage, my participation, again in CAREF Buenos Aires, included psychological assistance to refugees and asylum seekers as well as institutional support to the team of work, composed of social workers. In those years, we started a work relationship and exchange with Dr. Dario M. Lagos as a psychiatric consultant. At that time, he was participating in the Team of Psychological Assistance of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, which would later become EATIP. In 1995, I entered EATIP as a member of the clinical area and I am still working there today.

Once democracies were re-established in Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile, the majority of the people who were refugees went back to their countries of origin. The few that managed to establish themselves in better working conditions remained with their families, but not as refugees anymore – they remained as so many other immigrants that came and form a part of our society.

Since the eighties, our country has also received people from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe who have sought refuge here. In this presentation, we will specifically refer to our experience with Latin American refugees.

At this moment, there is a growing number of Colombians in the situation of refugees or asylum seekers, some of which have sought psychological assistance in EATIP.

Up to here, I have given a (surely incomplete) summary about some of the characteristics of refuge of our Latin American brothers and sisters in our country. My intention was to situate the following reflections within the framework of my experience over all these years.

Clinical practice and human rights

The construction of a clinical practice related to the defence of human rights is intimately linked to the events that Latin American peoples have

lived through in the last 30 years. Far from the victim-therapist relationship, it is about a meeting between participants of the same social reality, with different degrees of affectation.

Along our practice we found the theoretic and technical tools that helped us to comprehend the specificities of the impact in the subjectivity of the experience of exile.

Human experience in migrations is as old as the history of humanity and its implications for each society are multiple: historic, religious, cultural, political, ideological, economic, etc. Which are the psychological implications? Is there any difference if the migration is forced?

When an emigration is produced, there are internal and external motivations and there are also expectations - not only for the person that emigrates but also for the group which he leaves. The place into which the person arrives also has different dispositions towards him. These can vary from rejection and persecution to acceptance and integration. Even in the case that the migration was a choice and planned, the inter-relationships between feelings and implied reactions talk about an experience which exceeds what is individual and one that produces profound changes for individuals and groups.

If the leaving is imposed, or an expulsion, or a necessity to escape to save one's life and the return at the short or middle term seems impossible, the migratory process takes on particularly difficult characteristics from the psychological point of view. Everything that is left behind is felt as lost forever. The experience of migration/exile confronts the individual in a brutal manner with loneliness and his own capacity to be alone.

Those able to acquire that capacity will be in better condition to confront both material and personal losses as well as the inevitable exclusion that they will suffer during the first weeks of installation in the new environment. The migratory experience accentuates for a certain period the lived experience of "non-assignment": one does not anymore belong to the world which one leaves and does not yet belong to the world into which one arrives.

The possibility of developing a sense of belonging seems to be an essential requirement for a successful integration into a new country, as well as to maintain the feeling of one's own identity.

We consider the process of exile and refuge as a traumatic situation of social origin. That is to say, that over a more or less prolonged period of time, painful circumstances are extended that imply physical, affective,

material, etc. privations which correspond to a multiplicity of causes and circumstances of a social, religious or political type. In many cases, even one's own life is at stake. Going into exile, within this process, is just a step to which then follow all the vicissitudes of the integration into the new society.

A constellation of individual and social factors is produced which are determinants of the anxiety and sorrow that can or may not, produce clinical manifestations. The situation of migration/exile is one of crisis, a rupture. The specific quality of the reaction when faced with it is a feeling of abandonment. Potential space is broken, according to the concept elaborated by Winnicott, between the person and his environment (1972). The support that sustains daily life in an invisible manner is lost, and with it, subjectivity is also lost. Affections, places, work, activism, dreams and projects. In extreme situations of the loss of containing objects, the threat of disintegration and dissolution of the ego is acute.

Already in ancient Greece exile constituted a serious punishment: the condemnation to estrangement and distance. On the other hand, when escaping one many times takes upon oneself the burden of guilt for those who could not escape, something which contributes to the so-called syndrome of the survivor.

To construct a new potential space that serves as a place of transition can become a very hard task. The failure of its creation may possibly produce a rupture in the relationship of the continuity between the environment and the self, with a consequent decrease in the capacity of symbolization and creative capacity. The therapeutic task is fundamentally developed in this moment of the subjective process, favouring the recuperation of history, culture, values and ego resources in articulation with the new reality. Organizations and social groups of the receiving country also have a lot to contribute in a solidary manner, to counteract the reactions of exclusion and rejection, by promoting spaces of containment and support. The reaction of each person at the moment of leaving their place is not decisive nor determining in knowing if the event will be traumatic in its consequences, i.e., if it will produce a pathology. This will depend on numerous circumstances and also on the previous personality. Many times, before going into exile, other types of traumatic situations had been produced that put personal integrity at stake, such as threats, imprisonment and torture. Not always are there noisy and visible manifestations, but the effects of the experience of migration/exile are deep and lasting.

Along the process all types of anxieties are manifested: depressive, which give place to the bereavement for the abandoned objects and the lost parts of the ego; persecutory, confronted with the change, what is new; confusional, when faced with failure in the discrimination of what is old and what is new. These anxieties, together with defence mechanisms and symptoms, will form part of a characteristic “psychopathology”, whose evolution will depend on the personal capacity of elaboration and on the magnitude of the feelings of having been uprooted and of the loss.

In some cases we have been able to prove the existence of a period of latency between the traumatic events and their detectable effects. Confronted with new situations, evolutive crises or new traumas, long-delayed bereavement is re-updated, and symptomatic or emotional manifestations appear.

While currently assisting the children – now young adults – of exiled parents, born either before or while in exile, we can observe how the lived experiences and the feelings of that experience also left marks in the constitution of the identity of the second generation. In this sense, it is significant that a group in Argentina calls themselves “Children of Exile”.

Up to here, I have given a summary with broad characteristics of the psychological implications of the psycho-social experience of migration/exile/refuge. Now I want to remember some of these people that allowed us to accompany them in their suffering and in the search for the recuperation of their creative skills and their capacity to struggle.

Ernesto

Ernesto was a 45-years-old Chilean bricklayer, who after having been exiled in Switzerland for some years, came to Argentina after democracy was re-established so as to be closer to his own country, until he could return back there. In Chile, Pinochet was still in power. In Europe he had had his subsistence guaranteed as well as a good job for several years. Here, with an inguinal hernia and unemployed, he lived in cheap hotels with the subsidy he received from the UNHCR. He then fell into a deep depression. He would stand on the subway platform and several times thought about throwing himself under a passing train, until he finally came to us – practically as a last effort. Nothing seemed to snap him out of “the deep hole”. With medication and therapy he was no longer thinking about the subway platform, yet his life had no meaning to him, not even the hope to be able to return to Chile. Accompanying him involved home visits (in his room at the hotel), visits to the hospital and interviews at our organization.

An incredible resource served as a bridge, as a transitional space? One day I gave him a notebook and a pen for him to jot down his thoughts and feelings and thus be able to speak about them when he came to my office. This notebook then became 5 or 6, and he filled them with stories, anecdotes and thoughts about his years in (luxurious) exile in Switzerland. Slowly he started to recuperate his self-esteem, his interests, his motivations and his memories of Chile. He had his hernia operated and then made contact with a group of people that played chess. He also established relationships with his neighbours at the hotel.

He returned to Chile once democracy was re-established there. A little time later, I found out that he had managed to get a small house in a seaside town and that he had a partner.

Juan

He still lives here. He is Peruvian and spent many years as an asylum seeker and then as a refugee. For him, exile meant the loss of his position as a professor, of his activism within the union as well as a great distance from his family. His wife and son had been with him here in Argentina for a couple of years, but they returned to Peru because of great economic difficulties and the lack of work. For years he stopped all communication with them. Deeply depressed, he suffered from loneliness, the distance, the guilt for not having been present for his son. He barely had the emotional strength to send them a letter every now and then, in which he never mentioned that things here were not going well for him since he had never managed to obtain a stable job.

As from therapy, he managed to take up contact and communication with his country and people. He became an active participant in the community of the neighbourhood in which he lived in the Greater Buenos Aires area, thus recuperating part of his identity as a leader. He started training in different areas. The development of the Internet, in these last years, gave him a magnificent tool to be able to speak to his son who was an adolescent and to begin a process of approach towards him. A few years later when his son was 18, he decided to come to live with his father for some time. Their getting together was not an easy one and the son also requested psychological help. There are many things that he does not understand about the choices that his father made in life and the costs that they implied. He wants to recuperate him as a father with his history of being an exiled person and his activism, but needs to find his own path in life.

Upon examining the trajectory covered in the construction of a clinical practice oriented to the defence of human rights, Antonio Machado's verse come to mind:

*...traveller, there is no path,
The path appears while you walk.
Walking you create the path,
And when you look back,
You see the path that never again
Are you ever to step on.*

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Bolivia: journey to the centre of native america

Marcelo Rossi and María Silvia Campos

In December, 2008, representatives of EATIP assisted, as collaborators, the second stage in a work of investigation and expertise in the aggressions suffered by the peasants of Sucre on the 24th of May of the same year. This work was being carried out by the Institute of Therapy and Research on the Sequelae of Torture and State Violence in Bolivia (ITEI).

These experiences had been undergone by groups of young university adults who were autonomous right-wing activist, who anticipatedly manifested their opposition to a new show of popular convocation on the part of the government of Evo Morales in Sucre. On that occasion, besides, they dared to go against a state of things that goes back to colonial history with respect to the place which was granted to the original population. Particularly in Sucre, the birthplace of university culture which felt wounded even more ever since La Paz was made the capital city.

The Work

Work was divided into several stages: in principle, the collection of data and assistance in the field to those affected – something that had been started months before by the ITEI. The people were convoked to previous meetings mobilizing even their political and regional referents, so as to be able to elaborate – in a third stage – a detailed report on the consequences of the aggression.

Human Rights organizations that had been convoked and who carried out the corresponding legal presentations did not receive any answers. From there came the idea to insist with the claim for international support, which was instrumented through the UN⁷ and the IRCT⁸.

7 United Nations through the United Nations Fund of Voluntary Contributions for Torture Victims.

8 International Council for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims.

The second stage of work was started in Sucre on 12 December with the entity that had requested the intervention: the Unique Federation of Workers of Original Peoples of Chuquisaca. We started to give assistance to the first affected people in their headquarters. These people lived in nearby regions. Later, we found out that this meant a day of travel which many did on foot.

In the different spaces of the old and deteriorated construction where the Federation functioned, improvised consulting offices were set up, where the 11 members of the team – 9 from ITEI and 2 from EATIP – assisted the first 19 peasants.

The work modality, that was repeated in three other towns, consisted of a meeting to agree upon the expectations. On one side, the expectations on the side of the peasants, turned out to be – once and again, as was expected – not in the reparation or the relief of the pain suffered (the brutal violence was still felt in their bodies and memories), but rather that in the deep humiliation to which they had been submitted – and in them their culture – would no longer persist in the silence of the authorities, of the media and public opinion.

In fact, the first thing that called out attention was the brutality with which these people – men, women and the elderly – had been beaten, as well as the precise and methodical attack on the symbols of the original cultures, that were brought about, for example, by the burning of the ponchos and whipalas while they were forced to kneel there naked, being hit and forced to shout “Death to Evo”.

All this happened in front of TV cameras and security forces. The departmental authorities observed the episode, within the scene itself, while they declared to be, together with the citizens of Sucre, the victims of an “illegitimate” government, made up by ignorant people, Indians and peasants” who had put their country’s future at risk.

And although the evident exclusion of the segment of the peripheral and poor population is not something new to Latin Americans, it is fundamental to point out that in Bolivia, the conservation of the ethnic and original cultures and their differences have been taken advantage of by the power of the day in order to weaken them. This has been so since the Spanish arrived. It could be said that submission is, almost an ethnic characteristic, so that any manifestation in another sense does not pass unnoticed.

When our work was extended to the communities of the interior of the country, we passed through the smaller mountain ranges to their villages –

and it was there that we could see them at work in their tasks and customs, how their culture remains intact.

The day of work sometimes finished with an invitation to participate in their daily lives, so that on one occasion we found ourselves forming part of the celebration of a “wedding” as guests of honour.

In other moments, the sharing was not so romantic. In those villages where there is no place/lodge to stay overnight, we stayed in the house of some of the locals – but a great majority of these people suffer from Chagas disease so that this was a brief, yet true act of communion.

These lived experiences also strengthened the living-together of the team with members of different places in Bolivia, such as Sucre, Cochabamba and La Paz, and of Latin Americans with Argentines. The sensitivity of these peoples, who have suffered greatly throughout history, and who have an intense feeling of identification with the land, filled us with emotion more than once and we learned to share the worship of the Pachamama, during the short time we were with them.

Some of the members of our team, more precisely the medical doctors, had to remember our time of clinical practice, since still at seven months from the aggressions, many of the victims had not received any medical assistance. Many still had the stitches in their skin, and in the most remote places which we visited we found victims who had not received adequate treatment for their injuries, many of whom presented broken bones, serious chest lesions and persistent hemorrhages.

At present the work continues. The feeling, as in many other times, is that it is just beginning. The reconstruction of memory for the future generations is an inevitable and difficult task, when the highly effective mechanisms of social control and reproduction in Latin America are at the service of the official history.

When history seems to be a heavy and inalterable legacy, travelling through time seems to be a type of shortcut, as though avoiding the line of determination, or closing the circle, we go back to the beginning of history. With our feet placed in the same pristine and rough land of our forefathers, looking at the sunken eyes of the original peoples, it seems that we might say: from here we will begin to start over... this time a different story.

Annex: Medical report presented to the press

In total, 72 affected people were assisted, and they were distributed in the population according to the following chart:

	Men	Women
Sucre	11	8
Zudañez	20	5
Redención Pampa	13	11
Icla	3	1
TOTAL	47	25

Those affected, most of whom were peasant authorities, said that on May 24th, 2008, they arrived to the city of Sucre, capital of the Department of Chuquisaca, to receive a number of ambulances destined to their villages. They were going to be presented to them by the President, Evo Morales Ayma, in an act at the Patria Stadium. On this occasion they were intercepted by groups of many people who attacked them while the police personnel present at the place observed and did nothing to intervene on their behalf.

As a consequence of this aggression, an important number of cases were reported of people who had suffered beatings on sensitive parts of their bodies, in particular on the head, by means of kicking, hitting with the fists, rocks, truncheons, burns due to pyrotechnics as well as some cases of sexual violence. In some cases the lesions were very grave.

They also received humiliating insults and death threats, their possessions and money were taken from them, as well as their identity cards and other documents, cell phones, ponchos and cultural symbols. The peasants that had sought refuge in a house in Abra, were forced to come out and pass through the dark alley, where they received beatings, kicks and insults. They had to take off their 'abarcas', and after taking off the clothes of the upper part of their bodies, they were made to repeat statements contrary and harmful to their convictions and to kneel in the 25 de Mayo square, to watch their cultural symbols – such as ponchos and wiphalas – being burned.

For months both the physical sequelae as well as the psychic conse-

quences remained in an important degree due to the graveness of the harm and/or due to the lack of medical and psychological assistance.

A medical examination was carried out on 41 of those affected who presented physical lesions, 37 were found to have poly-injuries, among which the following were the most serious:

- injuries to the skull, in some cases with the loss of consciousness and seizures that, in one case, persisted for a month, persistent migranes and photofobia;
- symptoms compatible with the perforation of the eardrum (hypoacusia, tinnitus and dizziness);
- lacerating cuts on the face or scalp that required stitches and, which in many cases, did not receive proper medical assistance; in one case, we carried out the extraction of stitches seven months after they had been done;
- burns due to petards that affected the face, limbs and other parts of the body – in none of these cases did the person receive proper medical care;
- chest traumas with sternal fracture and unstable rib cage;
- trauma in the lumbar area with hematuria which lasted several days;
- abdominal trauma with pain, on being examined (even after some time had elapsed)
- post-blunt joint pain
- loss of weight in many cases, and one in particular with a reserved prognosis;
- symptoms of post-traumatic stress, which we will detail further down in a psychological report.

In the psychic scope

We have pointed out that a lot of the people suffered from what is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: nightmares, insomnia, sudden fright, nervousness, paralyzing fear (they have not been able to return to Sucre for their documents, studies, etc.), isolation, problems of concentration and memory, they suffer depressive states and difficulties to maintain their jobs, relationship problems, changes in personality. Whole families have been affected.

Many of those affected expressed that what they suffered on that 24th of May has left them strengthened in their convictions and in the necessity to continue fighting for their rights.

What happened on that 24th of May in Sucre worries us, it shames us and produces a lot of pain in us – as professionals and as human beings. We are here because we feel united with our peers in the unrestricted defence of the rights of the peoples; and this includes the respect for the different ethnic peoples and cultures.

We cannot accept that political and economic and supporter interests are above the most basic rights of human beings. We hope that impunity is eradicated definitively and that justice can prevail. Memory, truth and justice are the fundamental principles which must be sustained for the construction of a nation with a real future.

**TRIALS AGAINST THE REPRESSORS.
CLINICAL AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL REFLECTIONS**

WITNESSES

Lucila Edelman

Listen to a message on the answering machine: *“They arrested the worst one of the gang of the case. He was on the run. They told me about this at the court house, I am very happy”*. Then in my consulting office, Beatriz tells me; *“I was so happy, I didn’t know who to tell this to, that’s why I called you and left the message”*.

Beatriz knows, due to the particular circumstances of her abduction, the names and faces of the members of the group that were involved. This is not the usual case. This arrest is lived by her like a personal triumph. It is not about revenge. Revenge alludes to the non-existence of a third party. An eye for an eye. Justice implies a third party. In Argentina, there were no cases of revenge taken by one’s own hands or justice taken by one’s own hands.

The arrest of the fugitive, the trial in itself, is for Beatriz a reparation, a social reparation, a personal reparation. One and all are linked to each other in an indissoluble manner. A social process, a personal process associated in permanent comings and goings.

Beatriz is a witness in one of the cases against the repressors of the dictatorship.

Witness, *from to witness*,

I. Person who gives testimony of something or has witnessed it.

2. Person who is present or acquires direct and truthful knowledge of something.

“Organized popular movement recognizes that the ongoing trials are the product of their struggle against impunity for over 30 years. A struggle in which the claim for the trials and punishment to the genocidaires of yesterday was joined to the demand to finish with the impunity of today. However, when more than 5 years and a half have passed since the annulment of the laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop, 95% of the genocidaires continue to be free. And the 5% that has been convicted or accused, are there for a minimum number of victims; and besides, most of them have been released or continue to

be in scandalous conditions of detainment within country clubs or military installations”.

(Document of *Encuentro Memoria, Verdad y Justicia*. 24th of March, 2009).

Agamben (2000) points out that from an etymological perspective there are two words to refer to a witness: 1) The person who situates himself as a third party in a litigation between two people. This is not our case. 2) Superstes, the person who has lived a determined reality, has lived it to the very end due to an event and for this reason he is in condition to give testimony about it.

From the legal point of view, a person is at the same time witness and complainant. Witness because he tells things about others; and complainant because he claims for the damage undergone.

Jorge Julio López was the witness of the torture and murder of Diana Esmeralda Teruggi and of the illegal detention, torture and murder of the following missing-detainees: Patricia Dell’Orto, Ambrosio De Marco, Nora Formiga, Elena Arce and Margarita Delgado (from the ruling of the Court in the trial against Miguel Etchecolatz). But he also had been tortured and abducted.

Superstes takes us to the survivor. From the psychological and psychosocial point of view, the term survivor, which some use to refer to themselves, implies a coagulated identity, one that does not allow the possibility of creativity for the elaboration of a traumatic situation, and which alludes only to the past, when there is also growth and future.

In the beginning of the dictatorship, we also had to affirm the truth about the existence of the missing people, who for that moment had been abducted. The first movement of power is always to conceal and deny. And just as there are people who deny the Holocaust – and we have also had a case of this in Lujan – the first problem was to affirm the existence itself of missing people. This was achieved without witnesses, this was achieved by the Mothers in a public square.

Why did Beatriz say that she didn’t know who to tell? She is not alone. She is surrounded by friends, old and new, and other friends with whom she has shared the long path in the struggle against impunity. The hearing, my hearing, has a special quality. I hear her testimony within a different environment, almost without asking questions, because I feel that my questions might be invasive. It does not stop being a testimony. However, something spoken about in half words, a scene that is barely described,

about the death of another detainee while undergoing torture was enough to let things continue echoing inside me, with the intrusive characteristics of what is traumatic. I imagine how it must have been, how it is for her. I am also a third party that listens to her testimony. From different experiences, it is considered that testimony, whether within a therapeutic session or in a social context, has in itself the same therapeutic effect. But also, I am someone willing to believe what I hear and who explicitly shares the ideal of the quest for justice.

Once again, we insist that neutrality is not possible, not in this situation nor in any other. Besides, in the particular situation that the person we are assisting knows our ethical and political position with respect to the subject of Human Rights.

Of course that in the call, other components can be read, for example, there is also something of a maternal transference.

Amalia goes to the courthouse to give her testimony. And she begins to feel sick. She thinks she ate something which didn't quite agree with her. She must give testimony in three different cases. The second time she is calmer, but as she leaves she throws up. Again she thinks that it is some digestive problem and that she must see a doctor. The third time, when she believes she is going to face the situation as simply as if she is doing paperwork, suddenly and inexplicably to herself, she starts crying when left alone during an interval and the only thing that she wants, just like during her abduction and detainment when she was 17, is to be accompanied by her mother.

Testimony broadcast by an independent news agency: Upon ending her testimony, the witness made special mention of his opposition that Febres, one sole repressor, should be judged only for 4 cases of torture among hundreds, thousands of cases for which he is responsible: "*I declared innumerable times. I started doing so in 1983. When I declared at the trial against the Juntas, someone told me I would have to do it again. I laughed and said that when my son, Juan, was 18 he would take me to testify in his car. Today Juan is 27 and I still am testifying*".

The victims continue to be victims: "*For us it not at all easy to come and re-live these situations*" (*La Vaca*, October 2007). Marta Garcia, who was abducted with her husband (still missing at present) in Neuquen and later taken to Mar del Plata, has testified 45 times. The 45th time she stated: "*At first you give testimony so that society becomes aware. After giving testimony so many times there is a paradoxical effect: a post-traumatic shock that one did not feel before*" (*Página/12*, October 2008).

In the trials only a handful of repressors are charged in each case, the few who were emblematic or recognized by the survivors in spite of having been blindfolded. There is not a single case for each clandestine detention centre that covers all the cases. This forces the witnesses to repeat their testimony once and again.

The re-living of the testimony, the recognizing of the places of abduction and torture also have a re-traumatizing effect. But in each person the mechanisms are different. In many cases, when the witness is talking, he talks about what he lived through as if it had happened to another person. One listens to the testimony and is surprised at the lack of emotion. Conflictive situations in their current life are interpreted as the only cause of their subjective unease. Having to go to the same or a different courtroom to re-iterate their testimony, to go again and walk through the places where they had been kept abducted, end up acting on this dis-association and transform it into something ineffective. Other people, though, habitually avoid speaking of what occurred, yet sustain the ethical and political necessity of their testimony even though this forces them to enter into contact with the horror, thus breaking the avoidance.

This faces us with the problem of what is sayable and what is not. The psychoanalytic authors who have dealt with the transgenerational transmission of what is traumatic, such as Abraham, Torok, Nachin and Tisseron point out that when confronted with what is traumatic, the subject has a necessity of silence. Be it because "*there are horrors and terrors that have no words to really do them justice*" (Nachin, 1997: 81), or because "*the traumatic situation can become a stone, in a nucleus without symbolization, without ligatures*" (Kordon and Edelman, 2007: 112), or because the trauma implies something unacceptable for the subject who has undergone it – we can then find ourselves confronted with what cannot be said.

But the psychological category of what cannot be said does not correspond to the testimony, whether it is a legal one or not. The subject can say what occurred, to himself or to others, with social and legal validity, although we know that something of the most intimate will not be put into words, will not be expressed, perhaps forever, although we know there will be some gaps in the testimony. That is to say, that what is left out, without words, what belongs to the order of the impossibility of putting into words, does not pertain to the order of legal testimony.

For Agamben (2000), when he analyzes Primo Levi when he refers to the integral witness, the testimony "*means putting yourself in relation-*

ship 'with your own tongue', in the situation of those who have lost it (Page 162).

Sofia comes to our consultation to inquire about her depressive state. She is a witness and a complainant. She does not understand what is happening to her. She feels an overall weakness, and her clinical doctor wants to rule out a neoplasia. She has come to EATIP not long after Jorge Julio López has been abducted. She is not the only person to come to our consultation at that time. Sofia has no doubt, she claims, about going ahead with her testimony, but she has taken precautions. When she goes to the courthouse or to some recognition, a group is organized to pick her up or she asks the personnel at the courthouse to accompany her. Other people had come at that time to EATIP to request treatment.

The abduction of Jorge Julio López introduced a new factor: being a witness implied a concrete possibility – not an imaginary one – of a new abduction, the possibility of disappearing, this time forever. Some time later, Juan Evaristo Puthod, who had been abducted and detained when he was 17, and now is the President of the House of Memory in Zárate, was again abducted for 27 hours and heard the same words while he had a hood over his head: *“Your life is in our hands”*.

“The impunity of yesterday and today is painful: those who tortured Julio in the Pozo de Arana in 1976, who are almost all free and untouched by justice, and released by the Chamber of Cassation, the very, very few who were convicted. Those who made him disappear two and a half years ago are still walking freely on the streets and enjoy total impunity.

We fought three months so that the legal authorities would acknowledge that this was a case of abduction. Then one year and a half to have the Police of the Province of Buenos Aires separated from the investigation of the case. Two years to finally get some legal official to read the complete case and to start the investigation that involves members of the security and armed forces. When for the first time the circle was closing in on the instigators, masterminds, and executors, Judge Corazza excused himself from the case and then the new judge – a judge from the epoch of the dictatorship – dismissed the secretary and so again, the case is put on the backburner among intricate legal interests, silence and passivity – all accomplices of the Executive Power” (Document of Encuentro Memoria Verdad y Justicia, March 24th, 2009).

However, only a few witnesses renounced to their being a witness due to this new threat, independently of the added emotional cost.

From our position as therapists, we accompany our patients in their decisions in this issue. Our involvement is never a directive.

But I cannot refrain from mentioning the position of some colleagues who, imbued in what is post-modern, deny all obligation to give testimony. To give testimony should only take place if it is an act of life and not if it is lived as a social duty.

Independently from the concrete difficulties that imply the existence of a subjective differentiation between the act of life and the duty to give testimony, as if in our psyche there did not exist a Superego, I quote Primo Levi (1989), who places the following statement in the mouths of the Nazis: "Whichever way the war ends, we have won the war against you: none of you will remain to give testimony of what happened, and even if one of you escapes, the world will not believe you".

Testimony is, thus, a form of collective memory, one of the forms of the complex social processing of the dictatorship. The witnesses are not alone. Could they sustain this place all alone? They are supported in the immense social movement that, since the very beginning of the dictatorship, incessantly claims for the trial and punishment of those who are guilty.

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The trials against the repressors

Testimonies and witnesses

Some psychological and psycho-social implications

Mariana Lagos

“...To condemn Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz of all the other conditions within the case, to life imprisonment and perpetual and absolute disqualification [...] Co-author legally responsible of the crime of murder in the first degree [...] of the crimes of illegal deprivation of freedom in the first degree, torture and murder in the first degree [...] All these crimes against humanity committed within the framework of the genocide which took place in the Argentine Republic between 1976 and 1983.”
Norberto Lorenzo, Carlos A. Rozanski and Horacio A. Isaurralde. La Plata, September, 2006. Excerpt from a verdict of the sentence).

Is from the carrying out of the trials for the crimes against humanity being held in our country, it is necessary to go more into detail on some of its implications, in the attempt to state a new alternative in the scenario of mental health and human rights which convokes us at the professional and institutional level to carry out the necessary analysis, reflection and intervention.

All these years of practice in the work that we have been carrying out in EATIP in the accompanying of those affected has helped us to make a reading of the new situations. Beyond this experience, and within it, the examples and vignettes that I mention correspond to cases of public knowledge. Some were taken from the documentary *A clear day of justice* (Un día claro de justicia), based on the trial against the repressor Miguel Etchecolatz, former head of the Police of Buenos Aires, in the Number 1 Oral Courthouse of Federal Crimes in the city of La Plata, 2006, whose sentence

condemned him to life imprisonment. Also there are quotes from the testimonies in the different trials, news and publications on this subject.

The present material tries to give a broad view of some of the ideas even when the trials are still ongoing, and whose results every day bring new psychological, psycho-social, ideological and political alternatives as well as life experiences.

Each hearing, each testimony puts the sinister, massive and planned character of the political repression of State terrorism again in evidence and it gives a detailed account of the most horrifying and macabre tortures destined to the annihilation of the people who were abducted, to the destruction of the multiple demonstrations of the union, social and political organizations involved in projects of change and to the rupture of social codes of co-existence and solidarity which are so present in our society.

Upon re-thinking these issues, it is necessary to re-examine the first concepts of the psychological effects of political repression, in which with commitment, bravery and theoretic honesty, our founding companions at EATIP started this obstinate search proposing, as Diana Kordon states in the prologue: "...in the field of mental health, to work and do research on the psychological effects of the great problems that affect our society, because we believe in the concept of knowledge as a transforming agent of reality".

This revision will facilitate the comprehension of the current psychological and psycho-social effects and of the dimension of the trauma produced by the policy of terror of the dictatorship as well as of the subsequent impunity, which profound damage persists through time and is transmitted through generations; as well as the relationship of reciprocity between personal psychological elaboration and social elaboration. The marks of social trauma, still present, can be objectivized in the lack of guarantees and the deterioration of the norms of social living as well as in the multiple manifestations of the problems of silence and violence.

The trials for crimes against humanity

The annulment of the Laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop, and the declaration of the unconstitutionality of the pardons, have been a necessary condition so that currently it has been possible to take legal action against those responsible for crimes against humanity committed during the last military dictatorship in Argentina.

These trials constitute a most important event, not only for those directly affected and their families but also for society as a whole. It is about a moment in history of great transcendence for the reparation of the damage produced by State terrorism, and the manner in which it will be solved will be determinant for the future. According to Silvia Bleichmar (1999) "... as a resultant of the assemblage with which the historic modes, which form part of the production of subjectivity, are intertwined in the ideational processing thus producing an impact on the psychic structure, and offering its materialness so as to be able to articulate itself in social life".

The sustained struggle of the social and human rights movements, as from the military dictatorship until now, occupied and occupies an important role, it influences and fulfills a determinant role in achieving the carrying out of the trials.

Conditions of the carrying out of the trials

The carrying out of the trials puts forth a complex and paradoxical situation. At the same time that they imply the fulfillment of the historic demand for justice, they do not constitute in themselves the end of impunity. And it is thus that the real and effective means to investigate and open the archives of dictatorship have not been used, or that the resources to unify the cases into complaints representative of all the victims has not been achieved nor the possibility of indicting all those who are responsible.

Thus, the fragmentation of the cases which are being investigated in hundreds of court files in a separate manner downplays the dimension and gravity of the events. The age of the repressors makes it very difficult for them to be judged and condemned within these timeframes. The people who are directly affected must declare in every opportunity and on many occasions are brought in as mere witnesses rather than for their own case. They are obliged to reiterate their declaration at different moments, with the pressure and fear of having to sustain the same version over a long time, being that those memories and the forms of manifesting them are modified along one's lifetime.

Different modalities are observed in the conditions of the carrying out of the trials, depending on the judicial authorities in charge, as well as in the attitudes of the judges towards the witnesses that produce different effects and emotional repercussions, which can either favour or hinder the testimony.

During the hearings of the trials against the genocidaire Etchecolatz, one noticed on the part of the intervening court, a considerate attitude towards the people who were going to declare and to all those directly affected, their families, friends, and human rights organizations that were present in the courthouse every day, a fact which favoured the creation of an adequate environment for the development of the process. Spatial continuity among the witnesses and the public gives a sustaining and containing framework to the person declaring, at a moment of high exposure and tension. The empathy and gentleness in the treatment on the part of the judges and the adequate conditions in general decrease persecutory fantasies and the impact of the emotional destabilization of the declaration.

At other trials we saw different situations that produced intimidating effects and constituted grave attacks that made the witnesses and the complainants vulnerable, situations which for the most part could have been avoided. The following are some of the examples which have been registered with multiple variations, over these three years:

- Prohibition of the mothers of the missing-detainees to enter the court session wearing a white kerchief on their heads, a measure that imposes an arbitrary restriction which harms their identity.

- Exaggerated police presence in the court session.

- Separation of those who were to declare – by means of a pane of glass – from the public and an authoritarian attitude, and in some cases inconsideration on the part of the magistrates, who transform the testimonies into interrogations, and also long waits in closed and isolated places minutes before declaring. These situations become naturalized to such a point that even the media refers to them in comments such as: “The interrogation of the witness did not continue yesterday, as had been expected”.

- Prohibition of cameras and all and any media in the oral and public trials.

It is due precisely to the above, that the mentioned conditions during the development of the trials acquire so much relevance.

Isolation, arbitrariness, discrimination, censorship, intimidation, the demand of presenting oneself on reiterated occasions to give the same declaration, the authoritarian and inconsiderate attitude of the magistrates, are elements which are repeated, with the consequent psychic and emotional destabilization of those that declare. These tangled alternatives for the carrying out of the trials harm their reparatory aspects and relativize their real and symbolic value.

Testimonies. Role of the witnesses.

“We assume ourselves as testimony: To tell so as to denounce, perhaps save a life...recuperate the voices that were drowned in the detention camps, and resound in our ears without pause... As we discovered that testimony and duty were not only individual but collective, then we saw that survival was shared, different for every individual, but common to all since we are alive and we all have a name to pronounce without anyone to respond to us... For us, it is to continue being who we were, with all our wounds and our names without response, for these reasons, our identity is a struggle for memory and justice”. Paragraphs extracted from the publication of the 25th anniversary of the Association of Former Missing-Detainees (AEDD).

From the perspective of the transcendental situation of giving testimony before a court for crimes against humanity, various elements are put into play that are most necessary to be looked closer into. Testimony gives way to a reparatory dimension. It opens alternatives for the elaboration of the damage suffered, corresponding to the obtaining of justice.

Once the sentence was read by Judge Carlos Rosanski, Nilda Eloy was heard to comment: *“The sensation of justice is so inexplicable”*. As well as *“Chicha Mariani’s comment: It is a great joy, although the loss is still very present as well as the pain and the absence of those who are no longer here.”*

Those who declare are set upon naming those that are missing. Naming those companions who are no longer here results in a rescuing of the disappearance, that is to say, a symbolic recuperation of their identity.

- Placing oneself in the place of the complainant or witness implies a complex psychic work, one of intense affectionate mobilization, in which once again the dilemma of social responsibility is brought forth as well as the anguish and fears that come back, the lack of adequate containment and protection and the shadow of impunity which again occupies the scene thus not allowing the responsible parties to be condemned.

- The act of giving testimony implies making a decision that brings about a heavy affectionate load, since desires, fears, guilt and commitment (conscious or unconscious) are compromised. Giving testimony represents

the burden of oneself converted into the tool itself of evidence. The witness is the bearer of a demonstration of certainty of what is being denounced, which converts him into living proof.

- The value of giving testimony includes, as a condition, to transcend beyond the plane which is exclusively private. Giving testimony demands that another person must listen, that he be witness to the words, of the painful memories of the traumatic experiences. During her declaration, Chicha Mariani, upon being asked if she needed a rest, answered by asking the members of the court if they did not need a rest too.

There is an added value with a special signification in giving testimony before the State, which forces the subject to talk about what happened. Nilda Eloy states: *“To be able to declare is like beginning to live in another manner. After so many years of silence”*. As if that declaration had been the first one, because she had had a sustained attitude of active denouncement and had given testimony infinite times.

- To give testimony implies to go to the encounter of what is traumatic, as from contact with the lived traumatic experiences, which are re-activated as from their evocation.

In the narrations, it is possible to hear through the silence, the weeping, the gestures, the irruption of what is traumatic each time that the witness is left without words. Julio López, upon remembering that Patricia Dell’Orto had asked him to transmit to her daughter that she loved her, just in case he was released, says in an unstable voice, *“every time they talk to me about this I go crazy”*.

Another witness who was declaring before the Court, and narrating his terrible experience of having been abducted, suddenly could not continue and pointed out: *“I never could tell the complete story, he was one of the other individuals detained with me and he gave me a telephone number asking me to tell his family, and I never managed to call because I was so scared. It is very difficult to live with that fear, that guilt...”*

- One of the main difficulties in relation to the search for a sanction is the enormous pressure that the witnesses must bear, in which many times they are forced to fulfill the role of the prosecutors. It is as from the information and proof given by the complainants of the victims that the cases are established. Either illusion or reality, a demand is imposed in which the sanctions will depend on how conclusive their declarations are.

- Situations of intense emotional charge are produced in relation to the how and with whom the alternatives of the trial and the declarations are

to be shared. At each hearing, and especially at key moments of the trial, one can see looks, embraces, meetings, complicities, significant presences as well as absences. The daily *Página/12* published in its Tuesday, 20th November, 2007, edition: “*Lázaro Gladztein was abducted for 400 days in the ESMA. Yesterday, he was one of the last witnesses in the oral trial against the torturer Hector Febres. As those before him, he assured that Febres stuck out above the rest due to his ferocity. Gladztein asked himself two questions during his declaration: Why didn't they let my son be present at the hearing? And why can I not have the possibility to look Febres in the face?*” For this survivor of the ESMA, both things were important: that his adolescent son could see him giving testimony; and to see the face of the torturer thirty years later.

- It is frequent to see that a testimony includes a mission, a legacy, a subjective necessity to transmit something. In Julio López's declarations, the weight of the promise made to Patricia Dell'Orto while they were together after having been abducted, to tell her daughter Mariana that she loved her (in the case that he was released) was made evident.

- Intense lived moments of insecurity and defencelessness are produced, which are common to the evoking of the traumatic events, as well as a product of the dangerous situations that arise from reality, as from the moment of the disappearance of Julio López and the threats that many of the witnesses receive, thus leaving it openly clear that there is a lack of guarantee towards the security and integrity of the witnesses. A witness in the trial against the clandestine detention centre of Campo de Mayo, in the middle of her testimony said: “*I have the fantasy that after declaring here, they are going to get me again, they will take me away and kill me*”.

For these and other reasons, one's testimony becomes an instance of enormous complexity. It includes the desire that the long-awaited situation finally takes place, and at the same time, it is a situation of great personal and social burden. There is a feeling of facing a historic responsibility, with strong demands coming from the internal and external world.

To not forget anything important, to give a detailed account of the facts or important details that give conclusive strength to the legal testimony - there are strong pressures supporting what is expected from the witness, from the part of his companions, his family and even what the person who disappeared would have wanted or desired from him. After declaring, one evidences a desire to confirm if he has been up the circumstances.

It is from all this that a challenge is brought about to again accompany

these witnesses, conscious of the fact that the present alternatives open new possibilities of elaboration, but at the same time, renew contradictions and conflicts; and a very deep grief emerges and even new effects of re-traumatization are produced.

Testimonies: New requests for intervention

The carrying out of the trials convokes us in our professional role when faced with the necessity for new types of clinical and psycho-social interventions

From EATIP, we would like to give a specific space of accompanying and containment. Each case reunites us with people, paths shared, reasons which many times have been denounced, pain silenced for a long time, absences that are missed. Encounters and re-encounters are produced with histories and individuals with whom we have already come a long way, and with others whom we have just met under these new circumstances of presenting themselves as witnesses or complainants in these trials.

In some manner, the attempt to define the current interventions places us in front of the founding framework of our team in the objective of accompanying the persons affected by State terrorism. More specifically, our companions of the Executive Committee of EATIP, who came before us in the Team of Psychological Assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, constituted themselves as such as from the concrete necessity of accompanying the Mothers. And about those first experiences when still in the years of the dictatorship, they tell us that the meetings were organized around a story, i.e., the testimony of a mother who talked about her terrible loss and as from that personal history, lived experiences and feelings were shared, a group subjectivity was formed which supported and contributed to overcome and to elaborate the individual situation.

At that moment as well as now, the basic and necessary conditions in our work are explicit trust and commitment (in opposition to the concept of neutrality), both circumstances are associated to our institutional implication; the people who consult us know of our ethical and ideological position.

We place ourselves at the diffuse border of converging in the struggle and offering our technical tools for psychological and medical support. Sometimes in more formal interventions and in others that are less systematized, we try to define the possible and efficient approach mechanisms, taking

care of this double dimension which is raised in what is psychological and what is juridical. The approaches can be individual, relationship or group. As far as it is possible, going to the testimonial hearings arises as a necessity for both the witnesses and for the therapists. One lives through different moments in relation to the accompanying, – from the witnesses point of view as well as from the therapists.

This shared work allows a process of strengthening of the psychic resources of the person who is in the situation of declaring - movements with an elaborative function are produced and protective strategies are developed at the service of the preservation of the ego.

In relation to our professional involvement, the task brings about very strong emotional resonances as well as permanent questioning and re-thinking. Once again, the institutional framework and the meetings of the team represent a necessary space of collective construction which protects us and renews us in the enthusiasm and commitment of our work.

Besides the clinical work, interventions include assuming the responsibility, at an institutional level, of suggesting, warning and intervening at different instances of the Judicial Power on technical aspects which must be and for the care of the conditions in which each trial is being developed and for the preservation of the witnesses.

Likewise, we assume the professional commitment to participate in the expert testimonies of the repressors in representation of the human rights organizations that are complainants.

From our specific role, we propose to contribute to the process of the collective construction of memory, truth and justice, so that the latter can definitely fulfill its function of regulation and psycho-social reparation.

The trials are not only a heritage of those directly affected, but of the entire social body. The obtaining of justice will, surely, have reparatory effects on the victims, but it will also allow new dreams to be constructed and to recuperate projects of change.

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Retraumatization: A new old history

Silvana Bekerman

To begin, let us go through the summary of Argentine history that began 32 years ago. Although this is quite habitual when stating the approach to themes related to psycho-social issues and its objective is to situate the historic context in determined events that occurred, in this case, we are also aiming at another objective.

We could say that, perhaps, our country is one of paradoxes, or one where reality is always defying the most elemental logic. This occurs, for example, with the concept of crisis (which defines a precise and sudden situation that has some sort of solution in the short term). However, to talk about crisis in Argentina is to talk not only of something different, but also of something even contrary: it is a continuous situation, made up of many points of emergency, which go back a long time, and whose solution is neither clear nor visible in the near future (Edelman, Kordon and Lagos, 2002).

Something similar happens with history: usually, when narrating a story, we make references to the past, to the events that started, developed and had an ending, as well as the determined consequences derived from that same story. Again, this is not our case, because although we will narrate certain events and their consequences from a chronological point of view, we must admit that currently, when we talk about the past in Argentina, we are really talking about our present, given the repetition of events and situations which we have gone through before and which we all know about.

On March 24, 1976, the last military dictatorship in our country was installed. This dictatorship carried out a systematic plan that included threats, abductions, torture, murders, the disappearance of people, as well as the theft of children and property. Its objective: to implant a determined political-economic plan that required the elimination of all types of opposition and popular resistance.

The above-mentioned events constitute highly traumatizing events that, beyond the individual characteristics of each affected subject, have un-

doubtedly left deep imprints that marked the lives of all those who suffered it directly, as well as all the population.

To implant this political-economic model that we have referred to, it was necessary to construe a system of impunity which would allow the ideologists and perpetrators of the events to act without having to face any type of penalty or responsibility. For this, they counted on a State apparatus that validated their actions. Under this protection to genocidaires and torturers was hidden the defencelessness in which the whole population was immersed, subjected to terror and all types of human rights violations.

Once the dictatorship was over and democratic institutions were recuperated, it was thought that the system of impunity we have described would be deactivated, to give way to a State in which the functioning of justice would make those who had committed those types of crimes pay for them – by being put on trial and condemned, according to the law.

This, however, did not occur; even though the military juntas were put on trial, which was inevitable, given the popular pressure and the pre-election commitments, that were taken on by the government of Raul Alfonsín. This was the only instrument that was actually used as a response for justice. Its consequences were: insufficient condemnations to only a handful of those responsible, the exoneration of the immense majority who formed part of the dictatorial repressive apparatus. Faced with this state of events, one could affirm that impunity had come to stay.

With the passing of time, the constitutional governments did not even try to protect themselves under this image of pseudo-justice, the so-called laws of impunity were passed (Full Stop in December, 1986 and Due Obedience, in June, 1987) and the presidential pardons (in 1990). Thus, impunity comes about legally, yet illegitimately.

So, from this moment onwards, paradoxically, the social scene is as follows: those responsible for human rights violations are free, protected by the laws of impunity and a system that upholds it; and those that were directly affected – and due to extension, all the people of Argentina – lose the right to claim for justice, to obtain information about the fate of those who disappeared, to social recognition and to symbolic reparation for what occurred.

New losses, new bereavement, new traumatic situations that build upon the old ones, which in reality, are still as painful as they were at the beginning. Continuous traumatization, a second traumatic stimulus, re-traumatization, terms that somehow refer to the same phenomenon. Wounds upon wounds, past and present confused into one and the same reality.

At the same time, we know that the struggle for justice accompanied the development of this path that we are describing since the dictatorship's very beginning. The intensity of this struggle in the post-dictatorship period carried out by Human Rights and social organizations managed to achieve the annulment of the laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop in 2005. Without doubt, a true point of inflexion in history occurs: a possibility to put the repressors and genocidaires, who had been outside the reach of justice up to that moment, on trial. A historic and transcendental event which, however, gave way to a highly complex situation that inevitably, affected the development of the trials.

When we talk about a complex situation, we are referring to the fact that although the annulment of the laws implied an important leap in reference to the possibility of the functioning of justice, the necessary care was not taken to guarantee the action of justice (i.e., the repressive apparatus had not been disassembled, the judges who had been in this position during the dictatorship had not been removed, among others). And as the cases had not been unified against the repressors, it was not possible for the trials to develop within the adequate frames of due time and form. And neither was the security of the witnesses or other involved people guaranteed.

In function of the problems that have been generated regarding the trials, there has been a considerable increase of consultations in our institution over the last two and a half years from people who are witnesses in the current trials or in those about to begin, such as human rights activists or former activists. Some of them have been directly threatened; others, have not. However, the ghost of danger and fear has been installed in the lives of everyone.

Now, we are going to highlight some issues that we have observed in the clinical work of our institution and which are subjects of debate. The idea is to reflect and allow a debate to develop where what is traumatic, what is uncertain, sinister, real, individual, and collective constitute axes around which the analysis of this difficult situation is intertwined.

As a first point, it should be mentioned that four years after the annulment of the laws, less than 5% of the repressors have been condemned (among them are Etchecolatz, Turco Julian, Von Wernich, and Nicolaidés), and that in response to these judicial processes and their corresponding sentences, the repressive apparatus came forth again. At the same time that Etchecolatz was condemned, Jorge Julio López disappeared, the main wit-

ness and complainant in the case. There has been no information about him since then.

Two more abductions took place, this time with their later release (Gerez in 2006 and Puthod in 2008). Both are related to the case of torture carried out by Patti, a former chief of police. These cases prove that repression and impunity are back.

With respect to this subject, we should point out that although being a witness in trials of these characteristics can be difficult and painful, it is from the disappearance of López and what happened after this event what has determined the entry into another category: what is traumatic violently breaks into reality. From this moment onwards, to give testimony becomes associated with danger.

Accompanying the grave events that we have mentioned, numerous cases of threats, intimidations and acts of violence against the witnesses in the trials, human rights activists, judges and lawyers in the cases constitute a background upon which justice is being carried out.

Threats, intimidations, violence, abductions, disappearance: it is the past in the present. The primary trauma is being repeated and brings to memory what happened before, yet stronger due to what is again happening.

Simultaneously, other events remind one of the commercial against environmental noise broadcast during the dictatorship, which repeated Silence is healthy, in a meta-message which promoted social silence upon the atrocities that the State was carrying out.

The past becomes the present in different situations, such as the poisoning and death of Febres, a former prefect (December, 2007), supposedly by people of his own force. This repressor was about to be condemned in the trial that was accusing him of the appropriation of children during the dictatorship, and his death silenced the possibility of his giving information on this subject. On the other hand, events like this constitute a clear message to all those who, in similar circumstances, might be thinking about breaking the pact of silence that protects the repressive apparatus. Nobody can feel safe anymore.

The second thing to point out is the situation of risk we are referring to. And although it is particularly connected to those directly affected – in reality it is not something that occurs to others, it is occurring to everyone, since society must be re-signified as from what is traumatic.

Lived experiences of fear, anguish, uncertainty, abandonment, even a certain shade of paranoia, make their entrance again, remitting us to the

past that has left permanent marks. The past comes back and affects daily life. Uncertainty (in the sense of the loss of the most primary references) and what is sinister (in reference to what is terrifying), reinstall themselves in the social scene, constituting themselves in a threatening message for all of society: the border between what is real and what is fiction (or what is feared) is confused, and affects the analysis of the principle of reality.

Doubts, confusion, fear, persecutory feelings, terrible lived experiences: How to know if they represent reality or what is feared?

In the third place, we must point out that the possibility of putting on trial those cases for human rights violations is a highly positive fact, and although nothing allows us to go back in time and avoid all the damage produced, the action of justice undoubtedly has a great reparatory value. In this sense, the condemning of those responsible to sentences that are in accordance to the crimes committed implies, besides a concrete act of justice, the possibility of giving an individual and collective symbolic reparation due to the lived traumatic situations. In fact, if we think of the emotional impact which the achieved sentences have had on those affected and on society in general, this has been undoubtedly true.

At the same time, something in the order of what is individually reparatory is present in the fact of giving testimony, in function of the possibility of putting into words, of elaborating, of historizing, as well as in the opportunity of obtaining individual and social recognition of the real existence of the denounced events.

These same testimonies have a great value for all of society. They give the possibility of obtaining a much greater knowledge of what happened because they have been carried out within the framework of justice, and this reinforces the credibility of the witnesses, which in many cases had been placed in doubt.

Continuing with the problems of giving testimony, we can say that as from the trials, just as something of the order of what is reparatory is put into play during the trials, also something of the order of what is traumatic is undoubtedly present in what occurred.

Forming part of a collective body that struggles to obtain justice⁹ and the fact that the testimonies can help to achieve the punishment of those indicted is highly reparatory, and we would like to point out that this is a fundamental subject at the trials.

9 In the article “Procesamiento psicosocial y justicia” (“Psychosocial processing and justice”), Kordon and Edelman develop the concept of *collective declaration*.

Now, the process in itself has an important aspect in the activation of what is traumatic, given – for example – by the re-living of the experiences of captivity or by the public exposure of these experiences, among other aspects, but this does not necessarily imply that this fact operates as a factor of re-traumatization. In reality, we could say that in many cases the opposite is observed.

We refer to the following: we know that pain is inherent to life itself, and it will be the meaning that the painful event acquires for each person what will greatly determine whether it becomes a traumatic event or not. We can see an example of this in the restitution of the appropriated children: it is always a very painful process for them, those who today are young adults. However, the fact that they are going to know their real story and will be able to recover their identity and family ties is what allows the suffering of these young adults not to become a mere repetition of what is traumatic but rather an elaboration, in the sense of the construction of the identity, of personal growth, of subjectivization.

In the case of the witnesses, it is the same, what is purely traumatic would be the sole repetition of the narration of what one lived through, while the function that the narration fulfills – to help justice - gives it a marked restructuring and reparatory value to many of those affected.

In general terms, the trials, due to the psychic mobilization they produce, to the real work that they entail, to the direct threats or those that by extension accompany them, can occupy in some cases, a very important psychic space during a prolonged period in the life of the witnesses and their families. In these cases, the influence in daily life is such that everything else is secondary; as if they only would be able to take up their relationships and ties in the rest of their lives once their declaration before the justice system has brought about an effect.

In those people affected by human rights violations, declaring at a trial many times represents a desired and, at the same time, feared situation, with a great emotional repercussion. Simultaneously, we find ourselves with the aggravating factor that the trials - in historic continuity with the modality adopted in the trials against the military juntas (i.e., to separately judge each one of those indicted) - have been carried out individually for each person convicted. This means that many times the witnesses must declare in more than one case; and sometimes they are also the direct complainant in others. Undoubtedly, all these factors have multiple consequences at the individual level as well as in the family, social and working relationships of the affected people.

In our clinical work with those affected, we were also faced with a particularity: these types of traumatic situations of social order are intertwined, are confused with the individual characteristics of each one of the affected individuals, and this creates an erasure zone where what is outside and the internal world are frequently difficult to delimit. For instance, if a person presents marked paranoid characteristics in his psychic structure, when confronted with real situations of threats, these characteristics will surely be reinforced. In these circumstances, how do we know if we are faced with the internal world of the subject or with a scenario of reality?

Thus, in these types of situations diagnostic appreciation as well as the evaluation of the external context can be disguised, with the subsequent repercussions in the therapeutic process.

Another relevant issue which we find in clinical work is the fact that many witnesses, as from the threats some of them received, have decided to enter the National Programme of Protection to Witnesses, thus establishing a complex situation in many cases. The Security Forces are the ones in charge of this type of protection: a new paradox, if we think not only of the role that these Forces have had in the past and its continuity within the constitutional governments, but also of the fact that the members of these same Forces are suspected of being involved in the participation of the abductions of López, Gerez and Puthod.

In too many cases, the lack of adequate training to their personnel is more than obvious with respect to how to establish a relationship with the witnesses which is neither intrusive nor threatening, but rather one of respect and containment. The Programme of Protection is affected by mechanisms derived from common police work, such as taking mug shots, both front and profile of the witnesses for their identification, and this is accompanied by a concept of the work that they do, such as surveillance rather than one of care or protection. In summary, as there are no political modifications with respect to the security forces of the past, it is difficult to guarantee the adequate fulfillment of the function for which they have been convoked in the present. Undoubtedly, all these situations, which remit to a traumatic past, emotionally affect the witnesses, and reinforce the ambivalence with which they generally enter the Programme, thus creating conflicts which make it difficult to carry out this task.

We are aware that the decision to give testimony or not to do so is a personal decision, one which we must respect and accompany from our therapeutic function. In this sense, the anguishing dilemma that this subject

may bring about, the social pressure that sometimes affects this decision, the differences within the family, the necessity to comply with the ideal of the ego, the acceptance of one's own limitations and fears, are some of the problems that must be approached within therapy.

Finally, we are going to repeat something which has been sustained by our team for many years: we, therapists, are affected by the same reality as our patients. Issues related to our own safety, with our own fears and, in general, with the same affectation due to the situations that we have described, demand that we must constantly re-evaluate the social scene so as to re-position ourselves and not be overcome by this subject. Once again, we want to state the necessity of working within an institutional framework where we can be supported and think as a group in order to be able to share the difficulties that these problems confront us with.

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Psychological accompanying of witnesses¹⁰ in the cases of crimes against humanity¹¹

Margarita Cruz*, Silvana Bekerman, Cintia Oberti, y Mariana Lagos

The necessities of the survivors and their families

More than thirty years of struggle by social, popular and human rights organizations, of occupying streets, squares, classrooms and governmental offices, were necessary in the search for truth and justice due to the crimes committed during the time of State terrorism in Argentina. This uninterrupted struggle achieved, in 2004, the annulment of the laws of impunity – a necessary condition for the re-opening of the trials against the genocidaires.

Today, the carrying out of these trials represents an event of historic relevance as it reveals proof of the damage produced by State terrorism and constitutes a fundamental contribution in the processes of reparation, at both the individual and social levels. So we can consider these trials as a product whose development affects, no doubt, the social construction of history and collective memory. Likewise, the manner in which these trials are settled and concluded will be determinant for the future of our society.

In this sense, although we could circumscribe the role of those who carried forth the trials against the genocidaires of the last dictatorship to

10 The legal concept of witness is a complex category that has multiple variations. In our work, we use this generic term to refer to the survivors, relatives, eye witnesses, concept witnesses and complainants, but also pay due acknowledgment to the different implications, in psychological terms, that each one of these differences presupposes.

11 Although these crimes are currently characterized as crimes against humanity from the legal viewpoint, in our country there is an intense debate about the concept of genocide and its pertinence to define the crimes committed during the last dictatorship.

* Member of the Association of Former Missing-Detainees - AEDD (Asociación de Ex Detenidos Desaparecidos).

determined social groups, we believe that these organizations are the representation of a social necessity of which they have become, historically, the spokespersons.

Since its founding, the Association of Former Missing-Detainees (AEDD) considered the testimony of the survivors as a central element in the reconstruction of the historic truth and one of the essential components of the struggle against impunity. It was from this that they continue constructing a common expression of what the genocide had been, always offering to transmit what had occurred wherever it was necessary. The important thing is that the testimony of each one of the survivors not only constitutes material proof of the existence of the clandestine centres of detention, but it also has implications that go beyond the legal dimension. Their narrations reveal the magnitude and characteristics of the systematic plan of extermination that dominated the Southern Cone with the implementation, in the case of Argentina, of a process of supposed national reorganization. To achieve this purpose, the suppression of a generation that was committed to the struggle of a more egalitarian society was necessary. Just as necessary were social fragmentation and the rupture of solidary ties – all of which would allow the objective to be reached: to implant a brutal neo-liberal economic-financial regime. So the former missing-detainees and their families are the spokespersons of a political testimony that reveals, in the legal scenario, a historic truth that is not only a personal truth but also, simultaneously and fundamentally, a political and collective one.

As from the beginning of the trials that are ongoing at present, again a great part of the survivors had to become complainants or witnesses, as an unending expression of their resistance and also perhaps, as a possible exit when faced with the horror of the camp. In the same manner, they have done this over the years in the Trials against the Juntas, in the Trials for Truth, in documentaries, publications, etc. in the most diverse and creative forms. They are proof not only of their own affectation, but also proof of the disappearance of other companions, having to articulate their personal lived experiences in relation with a wider and more complex social and historic process. It is from this double inscription, both personal and collective, private and public, that they make known who they are, what their story is, as well as their identity. And it is in this manner that they also bring with them the identities of those that disappeared.

For EATIP, accompanying is an issue which remits to the origin of our institution, when in the middle of the dictatorial terror and later,

the founders of the Team accompanied the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in their rounds in the square in the search for those who had disappeared, in the elaboration of strategies for how to transmit what had happened to their children and grandchildren, in the comings and goings of everyday life in the House of the Madres. During that period of learning, the idea of being present when and where things were occurring started to grow, and it was recreated in each new experience and then became a part of the legacy that is transmitted transgenerationally towards the interior and exterior of the Team.

During all these years, EATIP has been developing different types of actions or interventions that we could consider as that of accompanying in the broad sense, in terms of sharing, of jointly participating in different instances in which we feel called upon, derived from the particular psychic and social situation of the different groups of affected people.

Currently, with more than 20 years of institutional work and within the context of the trials for crimes against humanity, from EATIP we continue to develop – together with other human rights organizations, among which we would like to highlight AEDD – tasks of psychological accompanying of the survivors, witnesses and/or complainants (these categories sometimes overlap each other) who declare in these trials.

Without doubt, these psychological, legal and political influences express the complexity with which the aspects – which must be taken into account for the development of these tasks – are presented, both in the broad sense which we previously mentioned as well as in the more restricted sense that we propose to approach in this article.

Accompanying the Witnesses

We state that accompanying is similar to being beside those affected at this intensely sought moment for over more than 30 years. We conceived it as an encounter in the deepest meaning of the word, between the witness(es) and the team of work. Each meeting is a shared occasion where we contribute our technical resources so as to go through the complex process of becoming a witness in legal matters; and where an intense emotional mobilization is produced which very strongly affects all those who participate.

The task begins with our first contact with the witnesses, either by telephone or e-mail, trying to establish a cordial atmosphere, telling them about what we are doing and putting at their disposal, the possibility of a

meeting so as to talk about giving testimony and the subjective implications of doing so.

Accompanying consists, in general, of several encounters, of approximately three hours each, in the days or weeks previous to the declaration. We work by listening to the testimony, we dispel doubts with respect to juridical procedures and to other situations that are common of the hearing (space, time, order, etc.) and we encourage them to express the emotions, fears and fantasies that the fact of declaring can trigger in them. The aim is to contain and lessen the heavy feeling that witnesses frequently reveal about giving a “good testimony”, because in general they feel that the responsibility of proving what actually happened falls on them. Many times, it is beneficial to think - together and anticipatedly - of possible and feared scenarios, of how and with whom they would like to share the instance of giving testimony, to have a previous physical chart of the courtroom and the dynamics of protocol, so as to lessen the stressing aspects of the moment of declaration.

Beyond the different value and connotation which each person attributes to their own declaration, we would like to point out the singularity of each witness and each testimony, as well the social inscription and historic importance of their participation.

The day of the hearing, we accompany the witness to the place where the trial will take place, we stay together until it is his turn, on some occasions we place ourselves next to this person in the courtroom and are present at the testimony, we share some time together after the hearing and we are in touch with him during the following days to see how he is feeling.

Frequently, when they become aware that the trial will take place, and especially from the moment they are given the date to appear in court, the life of the witness is totally taken up by the situation of the declaration, with the appearance of anxieties, somatizations, and in some cases, the exacerbation of chronic pathologies as well as the evident repercussions in relationships, activities and their social functioning in general.

About the testimonies

The work we carry out with the witnesses specifically revolves around the story that each one of them has about their personal affectation during the dictatorship, which is constituted into a testimony of the lived experience. The experience testimony, fundamentally for the preservation of the

psyche, is that which allows to put what happened into words, that gives it sense and significations, and gives the possibility of symbolizing and elaborating the different aspects of what occurred¹².

In some manner, as therapists, we develop our work not only from the narration of determined concrete events, but also from the subjective impact that these events had on each person. In this sense, our presence as a recipient third party of these stories gives the testimony a specific value from the symbolic point of view. Thus, a field is constituted where different elaborations, constructions, and resignifications, which form the analytical work, will be carried out.

In reference to the current task of accompanying those who declare in the trials for the crimes of the dictatorship, the influence of the juridical dimension is added to the narration of their experience, thus forming part of the contributed evidence. Therefore, the testimony takes on a new category: one of juridical testimony. And it will have, as a result, new connotations. The following observations will clarify some of these circumstances.

The person does not present himself here before a companion or a therapist, but in front of a third party who is the State, through judicial procedures, which commence by questioning the witness as from the obligation to tell the truth under oath or to bear the consequences. Also, the presence of those indicted in the courtroom is another strongly mobilizing element, one which awakens all sorts of fantasies.

These and other circumstances (like the frequent threats that they and other witnesses could have received) give the declaration a transcendental character and, at the same time, sometimes an intimidating one.

It must be pointed out that in that sense, the disappearance of Julio López on the eve of the sentence to the repressor Etchecolatz produced a point of inflexion, since it cynically put in evidence not only the existence of an active and efficient repressive apparatus as well as the persistence of impunity, but it also symbolically and factually questioned the never again, threatening the whole of society with the return of terror and paralysis. Many times, added to personal doubts and fears were family pressures towards future witnesses in an attempt to avoid what could be a new instance that would put the integrity of the individual or the family in danger. In re-

¹² Already from the initial concepts, D. Kordon, L. Edelman, D. Lagos and D. Kersner rescue the place that testimony represented for the people affected by traumatic situations linked to the dictatorship, as an element that from the beginning led to a personal necessity at an attempt of elaboration of these traumatic events.

lation to this, we state that just as declaring puts self-conservation at risk – that is to say, the risk of one’s physical integrity –, not declaring also has its cost. In consonance with this, it has been proven that in spite of everything, the witnesses decide to present themselves anyhow¹³.

The quite frequent event of having to declare numerous times, due to the fragmentation of the cases and to other grave fallacies of the judicial system, not only does not allow the dimension of the systematic plan of genocidal extermination to be visualized, but it also dilutes the responsibilities and, definitively, is functional to impunity. It also produces different effects of re-traumatization in those who declare, which sometimes exceed those which arise from the necessary evocation of the lived experience. As was pointed out by one of the authors in another article in this book¹⁴, there are many witnesses who, for different reasons, (for example, were detained in more than one clandestine centre) must declare in different cases, sometimes with only a few days of difference. Or also, a great many survivors are called to declare as witnesses in the detention of other companions, when they themselves had been in the same situation, yet their cases are not considered in that particular one.

Besides taking into account these grave re-traumatizing factors of the witnesses, we would also like to point out the reparatory aspect inherent to the decision of becoming involved and taking on an active role in the process of the search for justice, by constituting themselves in complainants before the State. The act of declaring responds, thus, to the principle of self-preservation¹⁵, which for the subjects implies maintaining the agreement between an act and their system of values and references. In this sense, we highlight the coherence of always having sought, from the social field, to put the repressors and genocidaires before justice: so that the accused perpetrators, unlike what happened during the dictatorship, can benefit from

13 Conclusions extracted from the Seminar “Trials against the genocidaires: accompanying witnesses and complainants”, organized by EATIP and the Chapter on Mental Health, Human Rights and Torture of APSA. It was held on June 25, 2010, in the city of Buenos Aires, with a great number of participants and professionals from all over the country.

14 Lagos, M. (2010). “Trials against the repressors: Testimonies and witnesses. An inescapable necessity of the past and future”. In this book.

15 Diana Kordon proposes to take up again the concepts of self-conservation and self-preservation defined by Silvia Bleichmar as categories of analysis so as to think about the psychological implications of behaviours or decisions in situations of terror or danger.

the very same constitutional rights that those who disappeared had been deprived of.

Over the process of accompanying, one of the fundamental objectives is to bring about the best emotional conditions for each witness, giving place to a work of historization and subjectivization that will be shown in different manners in the testimonies. From the psychological standpoint, collaborating in this work of subjectivization implies the following for us:

1. To listen to and contribute in the creation of a space in which to talk about the terrible situations that all of them, to a greater or lesser degree, need to show as a background to their declaration (sometimes the declaration for which they are summoned leaves out a great part of their lived experiences inside the clandestine camp, either because it places the narration of the events on the main level above its subjective signification, or because they are required to evoke situations in which partial events are investigated, for example, for only some victims). In this sense, our listening tries to be integral. We are interested in the signification that a particular person gave to the events as well as to the lived experiences.
2. To give the opportunity for each witness to show the personal necessity he has in relation to his particular expectations or desires in relation to the audience or the declaration.
3. To encourage the expression of different fantasies and feelings of the witnesses during our interviews with them, such as anguish, fear, sadness, guilt, anger, pain, impotence, responsibility, and which require emotional containment and support, as well as a certain work of psychological elaboration so as to diminish or avoid the overwhelming effects at the emotional level during the process.
4. To accompany the witnesses at the possible emergence of moments of bereavement (since in general this type of bereavement is difficult to elaborate or is at the limit of what is able to be elaborated) and to go through the re-elaboration of traumatic situations which can be re-activated and invalidate the person to a greater or lesser degree.
5. To resignify the role of the witness, by revalorizing the place of each one of them and of each testimony in particular, as a personal contribution to the collective struggle for justice. In this sense, we have observed that, for example, the children or the siblings of the disappeared frequently feel that not having shared the

circumstances of detention in the clandestine centre takes away validity to contribute significant elements to the declarations, thus making evident the necessity to strengthen their participation, helping them through their anxieties and recovering the singular feeling of each intervention in its own probatory value as well as in its personal one. We would like to point out the inscription of each declaration in a collective one, which includes them and surpasses them as individual events, so that it is not only their individual testimony which will determine the course of events.

In summary, we try to fulfill a function of support as from our professional role to favour the development of the best emotional conditions in each person so as to help them go through the difficult process of becoming a witness at the juridical level, with the objective of their giving a useful and representative testimony, and knowing that working with the narration of the truth will necessarily produce new inscriptions in one's own history, as well as new conditions of elaboration and subjective development.

A bit more about the mechanism

At this point, we can say that there are several differences between this type of accompanying and the therapeutic work that we develop within a more traditional therapeutic environment:

1. The framework here is more flexible (the meetings are usually carried out in coffee shops, the length is variable and much longer than in a therapeutic interview) (Lagos, 1995).
2. The objectives are limited and specific. And they are defined, at least most of them, before the meeting.
3. A witness is not a patient, although many of our patients are required as witnesses (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos, 2005). We go out in search of them to offer them the possibility of this work. We are not situated in a therapeutic place, nor is that our main objective. We might give some very limited interventions, but only in the hope that the mechanism in its totality functions by supporting and promoting psychic elaboration.
4. Neutrality, which is generally a controversial principle and one which we have always questioned in our work with the victims of

traumatic situations of social origin, is expressed in this case by its opposite concept: there is a clearly explicit situation of common positioning that links us to the witness when faced with the defence of human rights.

Finally, the mechanism of accompanying is showing its effects while the process is developing. The witnesses manifest that they feel surer of themselves and are more at ease with the organization of the testimony, and they present less anguish, both before their declaration as well as during it. And one can observe a strengthening of character in relation to their participation in the trials. In general, they say that they feel intense satisfaction and relief at having been able to give an important contribution to their relatives, to themselves, their companions and they acknowledge that they felt accompanied all through the situation.

Due to all this, we consider that this mechanism of accompanying has an elaborative and subjectivizing¹⁶ value, when confronted with the intense affectionate mobilization which the circumstance of being a witness in these trials awakens. We conceive it as somewhat of an artisanal work which is constituted among all of us who participate in the accompanying in defiance, in questioning, in re-examination and constant reflections, both within the group of work as well as within our institution. In this sense, the containment, debates and group processing within our team are essential as we are confronted with an enormous amount of emotions that affect us; and this – in turn – allows us to be able to design strategies for work and permanently re-think the work that we are carrying out.

All in all, we are trying, as from our professional role, inexorably linked to an ethical and ideological positioning, to contribute our technical tools to the service of the necessities of our people. We accompany the survivors, witnesses and families of those affected by State terrorism in their personal and collective process of participation at this stage of the struggle against impunity, with the conviction that only confinement in a common prison for all the genocidaires will allow us to construct a present and a future based on freedom, equality and social justice.

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Psychosocial processing and justice

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

The trials against the repressors express in different particularities an aspect of the social process and constitute true analyzers of the complexity of this historic period. They cannot be understood without taking into account the profoundness of the anti-dictatorial and democratic struggle and of its continuity in the massive and sustained movement against impunity.

Beyond circumstantial vicissitudes, we can appreciate the magnitude of the social movement that was deployed and is being deployed even today, in obtaining the application of justice in relation to the crimes committed during the dictatorship. As it could not be in any other manner, there were moments when this movement advanced and other moments when it went backwards. Thus, a short time after the end of the dictatorship, within the framework of a multitudinous demand for justice, the historic trial against the repressors was carried out. Two years later, the laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop were passed, which would be complemented some years later with the decrees of pardon to the top brass of those that had been condemned.

Each one of the conquered procedures towards the application of justice, which ended with the annulment, in 2003, of the laws of Full Stop and Due Obedience by our National Congress, as well as the declaration of unconstitutionality of the pardons granted by the Supreme Court in 2005 and the beginning of the trials against the repressors, have been possible fundamentally, to the widespread influence of the struggle against impunity in our country.

This whole process did not come about, could never have come about within a situation of neutrality. Since there had not been a revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorship, the juridical mechanisms have within them the mark of the character of the class of the State and of the political instrumentation of the dominating sectors. And, of course, the legal bodies carry all the weight of what has been instituted, while the social movement is the producer of what is new.

In spite of the enormous importance which the trials against the military

juntas have had, these retained the stigma of the political agreements that were made for the passage from the dictatorship to the constitutional government, which were very behind the popular demands and expectations. Thus, these trials became known as the *trials against the excesses committed during the fight against subversion*.

The value given to the current trials is not, of course, homogenous. Some sectors tend to absolutize the achievements made and they identify them with an “authentic democracy”, denying all its limitations. Others proclaim “this is what is possible” as a certainty without any questioning.

Let us consider, and this gives relevance to the obtained achievements, that it was the extraordinary popular mobilization deployed during so many years which brought forth the subject of impunity and imposed the demand of justice as a necessity of the social body. In this manner, conquests were made without even changing the system as a whole.

The annulment of the laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop had an instituting character, since it generated a new situation, which did not take into account the precedence of the norms on the non-retroactivity of the laws. Their sanctioning is inscribed in the multiples effects that the popular rebellion of December, 2001, had.

The trials which, as a consequence of this annulment, are currently being carried out, possess a great symbolic and historic value because they imply, in reality, and in spite of all the maneuvers of concealment and dilation, the recognition on the part of the State of the perpetrated genocide¹⁷. Today, some of the paradigmatic genocidaires are in prison.

If we understand culture as a synthesis of social practices, the trials, besides constituting political events, are inscribed as a cultural act of reaffirmation of the identifying social statements, and are in themselves, a new statement. They imply a production of feelings that contributes to historic memory. These feelings will be transgenerationally transmitted and will contribute to the construction of identity, both collective and personal.

In traumatic situations such as the ones that have been lived, the question of the sense of what happened is no minor issue. We have sustained that “*the problems of trauma are related not only to the de-structuring amount of the stimulus, but also to the sense that this acquires for each*

17 The term genocide has been imposed by the social movement. And in spite of the fact that in the sentence to Etchecolatz an important precedence was obtained by qualifying the occurred events as those that happened “within the framework of genocide”, the legal figure that is most used is that of crimes against humanity.

person and to the possibility of finding or maintaining adequate support for the psyche". (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos and Kersner, 2002: 91).

The trials legitimize a clear and defining line between the executors and the victims. In this sense, they contradict the *theory of the two demons* and their equivalents in the attempt of power in suggesting ambiguous spaces between those who lived together in the camps, distorting the abysmal qualitative difference of the places and naturalizing the living together of repressors and prisoners.

However, in its development, and as could not be in any other manner, there are the marks of the limits of that State and of the custodians of the continuity of power in the dominating classes. Due to the magnitude of the repression which was carried out, due to its systematic and planned character, it would have been necessary to adopt a methodology that would have guaranteed the objective of justice to become a broader reality.

The mechanics of the trials is in contradiction to the necessity of justice. The exceptional characteristics of the repressive event and the massiveness of the crimes are not taken into account of those who are accountable for them, and so what happens is that they are put on trial for isolated and individual crimes and not for a planned and systematic practice. The time that these trials require, the limited number of repressors that are reached by the arms of justice and the never-ending repetition of testimonies by the small groups of cases which in each opportunity are considered, the fact that you have to prove once and again tortures, murders, rapes, appropriation of children, which have already been proven repeatedly on a social level, relativizes their effectiveness.

On the other hand, the conditions of impunity allow certain sectors, which directly represent the interests of the dictatorship as well as those that use the dictatorship as their reference, to act. The disappearance of Jorge Julio López, in the first instance, as well as Febres suicide (a repressor), the temporal abduction of some of the victims of the dictatorship, the threats and persecutions to witnesses and complainants, are part of these actions and have a strong intimidating effect, especially on those who are compromised in the denunciations of the genocidaires. In particular, the kidnapping and disappearance of López has done away with the illusion of a *never again*¹⁸.

18 The murder of Silvia Suppo, a main witness in the case against former judge Victor Brusa and some policemen, in the city of Rafaela, province of Santa Fe, is tragically added to the list in which the threats to the witnesses became a reality.

To this must be added the campaigns of psychological induction which use the problems of insecurity to disqualify the human rights organizations and the fight for the trials and punishment to those responsible.

Although one cannot turn time around and change what has occurred, the expectation of justice has the meaning of a symbolic reparation, not only on the social level but also on the personal level, which includes a positioning in relation to historic memory.

Along the years, a collective testifying body has emerged, in which broad sectors participate and which has affected, at the same time, the traumatic and reparatory vicissitudes.

The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, public avant-garde in the anti-dictatorship resistance, made the immense social testimony of the denouncement of the crimes and of the struggle against impunity over so many years, part of their *raison d'être*. The equation dictatorship/missing-detainees/Mothers of Plaza de Mayo synthesizes a historic signification and a symbolic value in Argentina and the world. As from 1996 the children integrated, with their specific characteristics, this collective body.

The people who were missing-detainees, especially those that became grouped after these events and committed themselves to a project of justice and memory as from the end of the dictatorship, today make up the central nucleus of this collective body, which has not only given social testimony of what occurred, but also has had an active participation in the struggle against impunity. The demand that it must be the State which recognizes and puts on trial those who committed the crimes has been central to their activities.

Their testimonial weight is supported in their double character as victims and witnesses of those who continue to be missing-detainees, since they have known and lived from the inside each one of the events that require being narrated. Without doubt, the people who today give testimony because they went through the concentration camps and suffered during that experience all types of abuse – they have in their own right, the right to reparation on the part of justice. At the same time they are qualified witnesses that give testimony for those who are no longer here. As part of a contribution that was institutionally elaborated, they have investigated and described the organization and global and specific functioning of the clandestine centres of detention with the greatest possible rigour of information.

And although this is the social group which sustains going through juridical testimony, its role does not only respond to its own necessity, but to

the necessity of the social body of paying a symbolic debt with each and every one of those that have disappeared, with the people and also the abstractions, such as the ideals compromised within this historic period.

The importance of the trials is not only restricted to the past, among its objectives is the necessary construction of meaning, significations and objectives in relation to the present and the future.

Obviously, society is faced with new problems, necessities arise as well as urgencies, which the different social actors start to become aware of. But these problems, sustained by one sector, continue to have importance as they respond to a claim of the group. From this perspective one can comprehend, for instance, the huge participation in the commemorations of the 24th of March, as if it were an obliged and implicit meeting for the citizens.

Simultaneously at the trials, what is reparatory and what is traumatic are present. The possibility of obtaining justice is a great personal and collective motivation, which acquires a particular intensity in witnesses and complainants – beyond the lateness of its happening and the fact that only a reduced number of repressors are reached by justice.

Within the collective body that testifies there are different positions: for some, the sense of it all is obtaining justice and the expectation of a *never again* as the consequence. Others relativize the possible achievements and inscribe the obtaining of justice in a project of revolutionary transformation beyond the trials themselves, a transformation which they understand is the only guarantee of a real *never again*. And, of course, between these two perspectives there are a number of different viewpoints.

From the subjective point of view, every project – and in this case the project of justice – includes a desire and an illusion which gives it strength and energizes it. Beyond all this, in the obstinate clamor for justice, in which we feel we are involved, we find something extra that is linked to emotions: a desire, a certain illusion, whether of subjectively closing a period of suffering or of solving the impossible, the annulment of the traumatic events.

The symbolic value of the trials also appears very clearly when witnesses, who have talked innumerable times about the occurred events, and have again given an infinite number of times the same testimony, say, however, “This is the first time”, which marks a subjective difference between other declarations and those that are made in front of judges, who are the representatives of the State.

The participation in this collective testimony came about as a group and a personal decision. The recuperation of the lived history, within this frame-

work, possesses a reparatory character because it implies the comprehension of significations and the production of new meanings.

Primo Levi (1987) dedicated his life to giving testimony, beyond the context of what was legal: "*I am at peace with myself because I have given testimony*". Jorge Semprun (1997) also – yet from another perspective, and only at the end in a more direct manner, by narrating his own lived experiences.

In relation to the problems of what is traumatic, there is a debate about the consequences of pertaining to these groups for so many years. A belief exists that those who do not belong to one of these groups are better off than those who do; that this subject is toxic. This idea implies that there is a lack of knowledge in that determined conditions of personal experience leave a subjective imprint which is impossible to elude and they bring about the necessity of making decisions that will give direction, a way in life. That is to say, that the lived experience has consequences. From all this arises the banality of certain requests to abandon life projects that are linked to this situation.

Beyond those who have participated over the years in the construction of this collective testimony, there are many other people who have been convoked at the moment of juridical testimony. What happens most frequently is that those who have been more in contact with the subject can put more personal distance or have been able to elaborate it more than those who again take up contact with the subject on this occasion. In some cases, mechanisms of defence are broken (dis-associations or encryptic situations) which have been sustained over time, and which functioned as a condition to continue living distantly from the traumatic situation.

The subjective commotion of those who will be witnesses begins at the moment in which the trial is opened or re-opened, and it is violently activated when the moment of declaring draws near.

Without showing a traumatic character, most witnesses feel a strong sense of responsibility: "*I have to declare well*". The lived experience is that justice will be obtained depending on how well the declaration goes. This feeling of responsibility includes giving a present in attendance for the missing companions, in many cases by mentioning their name and surname. To name them is to point to the responsible person and of not accepting the disappearance of their identity: the State is, thus, forced to register and become responsible for the person who has disappeared.

The demand that the trials be oral and public, as well as televised, is

part of the clamor for reparation and of considering that it is an issue that concerns all of society and not only a particular sector.

When we refer to what is traumatic, we differentiate two aspects: on the one side there are the traumatic re-lived experiences, which are inevitable in the construction of the testimony. But on the other hand, the new traumatic situations which are generated by the threats of the present, which acquire their maximum expression in the disappearance of López; they have a re-traumatizing character. The selection of the instrument of intimidation is not random: it makes the possibility of disappearing reappear.

On the other hand, what is traumatic makes itself present within the same reparatory situations: both horror and what is sinister reappear¹⁹.

The way in which the trials are being carried out: if they are oral and public, if the repressors are present, what the atmosphere is like where the trials are taking place, if they are televised, etc. affects the lived experience of those who are present, whether they are witnesses or not. When the repressors are present, it is very shocking to see them in the situation of being on trial. Their presence and personalization produces an emotional proximity due to the events for which they are being tried. Strong and varied feelings, like hate and fear, suddenly arise.

In turn, the repressors themselves try to use or take advantage of the trials, like Bussi, who not only intimidated the witnesses (who in some cases even interrogated them) but also the whole of society. Or Astiz, who was smiling and defiant while he showed a book entitled “Killing Again”, is in himself a threat.

We have approached some issues that are brought about by problems in ongoing development and which today rather than give answers, make more interrogations arise.

To know about and interpret events that happened in the past, to comprehend the historic experience, allows a social group to make this experience theirs and to elaborate it, so that the transformations of the present and the formulation of projects are considered necessary and desired by the group as a product, in the rupture or the continuity of a process. It also assures the identity of this community – which in this case is the whole of Argentina and not only the group of those directly affected.

In summary, the trials are a new moment in the social processing of the

¹⁹ Jorge Julio López expressed it explicitly, upon remembering Patricia Dell’Orto’s request: “*Every time they talk to me about it I go crazy*”.

resistance to the dictatorship and impunity. In this sense, we can say that the trials are what we managed to obtain. Their effects, as the closure of a period or not, are still open.

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On the expert examination against former Admiral Massera

Written report given to the public after the expert examination

Diana Kordon and Daniel Kersner

Professional practice often confronts us with extreme situations, like making decisions that are a matter of life or death, freedom or the well-being of a person – these are difficult ethical dilemmas that we have to face. The expert examination which we carried out as expert psychiatric witnesses of the complainants against the genocidaire Eduardo Emilio Massera, is precisely one of these situations.

On two occasions we, together with the expert officials, visited Massera in his apartment on Del Libertador Avenue. The first time we stayed more than four hours; and the second time we went, we stayed for three hours and a half. We examined him psychiatrically, we interrogated him, we gave him tests, we interrogated him again and we again gave him tests. As representatives of the umbrella human rights organization *Justicia Ya!*, our subjective position, obviously, was not neutral. We wanted to discover the simulation, the deceit, the lies, the traps. We wanted to find him fit for being put on trial and sentenced, as he had been some time ago. As professionals committed to human rights and popular causes, it would have been a motive of pride and satisfaction, both at the personal and institutional levels, to be able to contribute with our knowledge to the judging of this genocidaire.

But due to reality, that is to say, Massera's health and more specifically, his mental health, do not allow him to be judged. Much to our regret, we must acknowledge this, the mental deterioration that he has, above all at the cognitive level, does impede him to be judged. As Argentines, as part of the people of Argentina, we feel frustrated with this situation, yet we can't under any circumstance falsify what to our understanding is evident: Massera, the genocidaire, at this moment is not in a fit condition to be subjected to a judicial process, with the necessary comprehension of each one of his statements and acts, as well as their judicial implications.

As medical doctors committed to science and truth, this is what we must inform.

The impunity which is reigning in Argentina is the first thing that is responsible for the current situation – let us remember that Massera was judged and condemned and later pardoned by Menem. Without that presidential pardon, he would still be in prison. The passing of time, both in the case of Massera as in the cases of many other repressors, forces justice to arrive late and badly; and in this case, to never arrive. As a result of this, 95% of the repressors are free and of the remaining 5%, most of them are in house arrest or in facilities pertaining to security forces.

Those repressors who, by the inexorable passing of time, today are not in a fit condition to comprehend, shall not be judged. And this is so, due to the responsibility of the accomplice governments.

It is very doubtful that Massera will ever get better, so that he will be part of this impunity. True justice – efficient, timely, without privileges – will only be achieved when we have a State that represents and defends the interests of the people.

With anger and pain, but also with hope in the struggle.

May, 2009

SUBJECTIVITY, PSYCHOSOCIAL
TRAUMA AND CULTURE

Pavement tiles: the imprints of collective memory

Mariana Lagos, Monserrat Olivera and Cintia Oberti

Tiles.

Tileso nt heflo or.

Tileso nt heflo ort hats ustaint hew alking.

*Tileso nt heflo ort hats ustaint hew alking
ofa ctivistst hatco mea ndgo .*

Bringinga nds howinga llt hatt heyca ngive

Tot hosew ho need it, to those theylo ve.

Tilest hats lowlyma ket hemselvesn oticed

in ever yn eighbourhood, in ever ys treeto fever yp lace.

Tiles which are looked at, read, cared for, admired, while walking past.

Once again from our professional role and together with the people most directly affected, we are surprised by the creative and solidary forms of the struggle. They arise as social responses and constitute the real and symbolic heritage that reveals the values and ideals that make us proud and represent us.

Following this mode of thought, since four years ago, different neighbourhood organizations, reunited under an umbrella organization called *Neighbourhoods for Memory and Justice* (Barrios X Memoria y Justicia), took the initiative to find out who were those that had disappeared in their neighbourhoods and to recuperate their identity. The summary of the work was made material by the situating of a pavement tile in a significant place of the history of the honoured person, in an act that was shared through the voices of their families and friends remembering the person's personality and his life.

This is a process of construction that takes and will take much time and effort, and in which we must point out the deep commitment as well as the evident attitude of opening up of those who are carrying out this incredible experience.

Probably due to this democratic and dynamic boost, in December, 2008, the book *Baldosas X la Memoria or Pavement Tiles for Memory*, was published. They define it as a collection that reflects the activities of the commissions of the different neighbourhoods; and at the same time, it constitutes a new testimony of this social practice. In the prologue, the following is stated:

“We proposed to undo the path of Oblivion in our neighbourhoods... We have done so because we want to re-humanize them, give them back their identities of committed social activists and vindicate them. For this, we have walked through the neighbourhoods and reconstructed pieces of history, we left a milestone of their existence at the place where they lived, studied, worked, were activists or where they were gunned down by the bullets of the genocidaires; and we seek testimonies of their lives through each one of our neighbourhoods.”

“We want these pavements which they walked on to talk of them. For this reason we decided to point out these places as imprints or marks on the ground, in their memory” (Barrios por Memoria y Justicia, 2008, Page 9).

It was through a patient of EATIP that we contacted this umbrella organization. Convinced of the importance that these practices contribute to the construction of new subjectivities, our institution approached this organization in order to give it support and to accompany the families, friends and activists dedicated to this task.

The events of December, 2001, installed a new social subjectivity of power, groups and non-anonymity. Thus, the taking of public spaces, the banging of pots and pans while chanting *“Let them all leave”*, the spontaneous, massive and rotund response of the people when confronted with the state of siege, marked a milestone that was strongly inscribed at the individual and collective level. In this sense, it is possible to sustain that this activity of placing the pavement tiles forms part of the multiple modes of social expression produced as from the popular commotion and mobilization of the year 2001, in which trust in the power of the majority as a tool of clamor and change was being recovered.

From this viewpoint, we could think of the initiative as a new group practice, of the rescuing of memory which, from a psychosocial perspective, puts different phenomena of de-alienation and psychological elaboration into action.

Those who disappeared are the paradigmatic figure of what State terrorism implied in our country, and their presence-absence as from the pain and loss of each one of them and of all of them has gone through different moments over the years. They suffered the denial of the genocidaires, and were clamored to appear alive by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. And just as at one moment it was the decision of the human rights movement to consider the 30,000 as a whole in the demand for justice, at that moment the search for the individuality of each person, of their environment, their ideals and values, appears as a possibility which corporally recreates them in all their dimension and singularity, giving them back and giving us back their re-signified persona to carry with us forever.

It is thus, that while participating in the collocation of a pavement tile we found ourselves listening to the story of the family of one, two, some missing-detainees on a street of a certain neighbourhood, university, theatre, square, school; all of which are representative and emblematic places of what is intimate and public in the history of the life of each of the honoured persons. In each shared commemoration a collective process of investigation is visible, some are longer than others in which the groups of neighbours, relatives and friends built a sort of jigsaw puzzle of the aspects, short poems, thoughts and feelings, stringing together memories and recovering the companion, son, friend, revolutionary. Opinions, information, comments of the members of the neighbouring mechanics' garage, of the teacher, of the co-workers, of activists, parents, siblings, sons and daughters as well of grandchildren suddenly come forth.

This process allows information to circulate, and it also allows the transmission of family histories, the meetings and the desire of people who have the courage to talk about and share moments and lived situations that go back to other stages of their lives to come forth – along a path which reconstructs the essence of those who disappeared, producing infinite effects in each one, from the organizations to those who are present, as a mirror-image that is multiplied in our ideas and feelings.

It is interesting to point out that there are municipal norms that authorize the placing of these pavement tiles. It is about a guarantee which importance legitimizes the claim to imprint marks of our recent history. Likewise, it is fundamental to point out the participation of the neighbours, whose numbers increase and who contribute to the reconstruction of stories and facts and carefully decide where to place this tile – which will become interiorized from the homage and in the future; they will be in charge of giving sense to the new

pavement tile that stands out from the grayness and monotony of the pavement with its bright colours. As an example, we can mention that the members of the different groups of “Barrios X Memory y Justicia”, tell the story of a 60 plus-year-old man, who approached them to comment that he had been a classmate of the person whose name was on the pavement tile and had not known that this person was a missing-detainee until he read it on the tile. As from this moment, this neighbor started to participate in the homages to other missing-detainees of the neighbourhood.

Another encounter or re-encounter that arises from this work of investigation and search is the recuperation of other smaller or bigger acts of memory or commemoration that have been carried out at different moments. Thus we can see innumerable testimonies in their different modalities: photographs, blogs, Internet websites, literary and musical works – all of them manifestations and creations which have been constructed silently or spectacularly over the years and which are example and heritage of the multiple commemorations, from those that are more individual and familial to the forms of struggle and resistance of the social movements in the construction of the true story.

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman (2007) point out: “*The commemoration gives place to an active production, an imaginative and creative development, and can have modifications at any moment, that is to say, it remits to a process of permanent change and movement*”. And add: “*Monuments always have a high signification. They can mark historic milestones, signals left by the victors or vanquished, figures which the different sectors and social classes leave to mark the paths. The monument will have, then, a sense of marking, marking for history, so that the future generations can recognize and hold on to history as from a determined perspective... Many times the necessities of the present recuperate the value of these instruments, whether to consolidate what has been instituted or to transform it*”. (Page 42).

The sense of the above is manifested in infinite dimensions and repercussions which this new practice of the collocation of the pavement tiles acquires, and allows us to explain the production of the clinical and psychosocial effects that arise from this.

Perhaps we can find as an antecedent to these types of homages, the memory slots published in the daily *Página/12* since its founding in 1987. This proposal allowed the families to have a space for the commemoration of those who disappeared. Beyond the political and affectionate sense

and the particular characteristics of these publications, it also puts into evidence the role that the otherness plays in the processes of personal elaboration. The necessity to publish these memory slots in a means of mass information includes what is social as a necessary factor of all commemoration. *“The work on the problems of memory and identity state, then, the relationship of interiority between psychic work, relationships and the collective production of memory and identity”*. (Kordon and Edelman, 2007:66).

With the motive of its 20 years of consecutive publication, a special edition made the following reference:

“From the pages of the newspaper for 20 years, day after day the collective memory of our recent history is constructed. Every day when we read the news we find ourselves with the photo of someone who is a missing-detainee, with his/her name, a date and a text:

New generation that makes them present.

Fruito ft hefr uito fa lo vew hichh istoryh asma deet ernal.

Love intact in memory.

Love which marks paths.

Love which overflies.

Love which survives.

Alive appearance of Julio López.

The memories of their families and friends showed us their disappeared companions from an unknown aspect to us. Next to the photo – the face that makes us similar to them, that stops them being a mere number among the 30,000 –, the references about their political identity, about their musical preferences, some poem that they wrote in their youth, the family stories.

And also from that place of individual claim, the other, the collective one. “No to the pardons”, “We shall not forget, we shall not forgive” and the more recent “Common and effective jail to the genocidaires” and “Unification of the cases”. As from these memory slots, a position has been fixed according to the political context of the moment.

Every year, each family continues to tell the story and every day one can see the evidence of the necessity as a society to not forget. Even today, families of those who disappeared come forth and for the first time publish their memory slot. They are invaded by the pain of injustice that those who

have been publishing these slots have felt for 20 years. And what really shocks is to see children arrive who are older than their parents.”

We must mention that each commemoration is different and is nourished by the characteristics proper to the honoured person and by the particular mode in which those who loved him prefer to remember the missing-detainee. Also, these commemorations are influenced by the special meaning that it takes on for the group who organized this commemoration as well as the place that was chosen and the neighbours who come to be present at the moment of the act of the collocation of the pavement tile, as well as some witnesses who were present at the time the events occurred in the past and others, who become involved at the moment of placing the tile.

In some cases, such as the placing of the tiles in schools, the event installs itself as an event that convokes the whole educational community; and in the children and adolescents it represents a legacy to remember in the history of the institutions to which they belong. It is about acts or assemblies, frequent situations in schools, which in this case acquire a different value, since they reinstate the word about people, situations, anecdotes which had been buried and are now authorized to come forth. In this manner, one meets the teacher/professor who had known them, the classmate who had sat next to them and remembers them as sensitive and solidary human beings, their children who now have children of their own and who might go to the same school.

Some of these pavement tiles stick out from the others due to the symbolic strength of the place where they were placed. The tile placed at Garage Azopardo is very visible in one point of the city, amongst the rapid steps of all those who are getting their passports and the presence of the police at this building for reasons of security. Their presence reminds one of the existence of a clandestine centre of detention which functioned there during the dictatorship. Another tile that was placed in September, 2008 in homage of the detained activists (for political reasons) who were murdered at that place, is clearly seen on the door to the jail of Devoto. At the moment that it was placed, several artistic works were expressed, among which there was an especially moving moment when the son – already an adult – re-read the letters with tears rolling down his cheeks and an unstable voice, that his mother had written to him as a child while she was in jail. Another special moment was when former activists were reunited after so many years; some of them continued to be activists in different ways while others who had left this mode of life, had felt the desire or necessity to participate in this commemoration.

On another occasion, at the door of a theatre, besides the moving words of the families, there were young adults singing with such firm and hopeful voices that one felt a tingling sensation all over. There, the sister of a missing-detainee said: “*Nothing much is said about Julio López because it is unbearable*”, alluding to denial as the mechanism of defence that preserves the person from the anguish of an event of such great magnitude and to the reappearance of what is sinister and its overwhelming affect at the psychological level.

Art always has a space through its different types of expression. Music and singing were part of some of these encounters; in others, it was photographs and, recently, some words of the poem “*Desaparecidos*” by Mario Benedetti were recited, as a mode of homage and farewell to him:

*They are in some place
brought together/baffled deaf
looking for each other/looking for us
blocked by signs and doubts
contemplating the gates of the squares
the bells on the doors/the old attics
putting order in their dreams in things forgotten
perhaps convalescing from their private death
when they started to disappear
three five seven ceremonies ago
to disappear as without blood
as without a face and without a motive
they saw through the window of their absence
what had been left behind/that scaffolding
of embraces sky and smoke
they are in some place/cloud or tomb
they are in some place/I am sure...*

From our perspective of accompanying, learning, and exchanging we have participated in moments of great affectionate mobilization. It was possible to accompany a mother who up to that moment could not even mention the disappearance of her daughter, and who, as from this activity became able from the psychic and affectionate space to talk about her daughter’s ordeal after so many years. By actively participating at the placing of this tile and moved by the whole situation, she was able to get closer

to another daughter and her granddaughter, thus alleviating her anguish and grief by feeling accompanied and contained. At that place, a support was produced which made her feel psychologically strengthened.

In the neighbourhood of San Cristobal, the grandson of a missing-detainee revealed that although he had never met his grandfather, he felt that he was starting to know him as from the act of commemoration, and that he felt proud of the values that his grandfather had defended.

On an autumn morning in La Paternal, a woman told us that she had been the best friend of the youngest daughter of the person being commemorated, and although she had been only 15 at the moment of the abduction of this man, she remembers him – as a happy and affectionate person -in his house with his wife and children. When she found out about this homage, she felt “*that someone/something was shaking the carpet underneath her*”, that she could not avoid going, and showing that she was moved and very affected.

On the same occasion, an older person that was passing by with a shopping bag in the neighbourhood asked what was happening. She became very moved when she heard our answer, and exclaimed: “*Thank you!!! We have another tile on the door of the bank on the corner. This is very good, because every person who passes by will remember them*”. Another older lady, with very wrinkled skin, told us: “*I knew him and I know his sister; he was a medical doctor to the poor. One could always count on him, at any time of day or night you could ring the bell at his house*”.

Thus it is that voices are added in the evocation and a feeling is produced which rapidly goes around the space, unifying and linking all those who are present beyond their differences, and this renews their commitment.

These stories are full of human warmth and, at the same time, they have the symbolic evidence of the recuperation of what had been denied, of what had been said to be false, of what had been demonized. They impose themselves with the instituting strength of the construction of real history. They express the way in which social movements are organized when an idea arises that perceives a subjective necessity of a collective nature and is transformed into a task taken up by a group.

We do not want to leave out mentioning that in this process of being present and sharing the placing of each pavement tile, we also feel moved due to personal motives. For many of us, it represents in what is personal, as from different places of involvement, a re-encounter with stories, places and companions that we had stopped seeing. We were moved, rethinking

and ratifying past and present choices and commitments. We found ourselves shaking off the dust of our memories and lived situations during the dictatorship, suddenly moving house, walking along the streets in an internal search which once again awakens.

In a recent investigation which we carried out in EATIP, we defined the psychic marks as: “...*identifying milestones, with an important incidence in the constitution of the identity of the subject. They behave as a sort of organizer of a series of aspects of psychic life, and given its functioning as a structuring part of the identity, they will say something about the subject himself and in his relation to others*” (EATIP, 2009:160). So we again take up here, this concept of psychic marks, alluding in a strict manner to that purpose of leaving *marks with their imprints*, defined by those who have lived through these activities, and to associate this concept to the incidence that these marks will have in the order of what is subjective in all those who are involved in different manners, in all those who discover the marks on their paths and in the social scenario, as something unavoidable since they will represent – in a definite manner – the marks of a generation that fought for a model of a just and solidary country.

We celebrate and share these new social responses of the placing of the pavement tiles, convinced of the elaborative effects they will bring about at the transsubjective and transgenerational levels, since we believe that practices of this nature fulfill a fundamental role in the processes of symbolic reparation. This activity in the neighbourhoods, in which at last things are talked about which were so difficult to talk about, in which once more the public space is occupied and in which adults, children, young adults and older people participate – where a space is open to affections and ideas, allowing the construction of new social representations that are producers of new subjectivities.

ALWAYS

*Although hes tepsma yt oucht his place a thousand years
they will not erase the blood of those that fell here.*

*Andt heh ourin w hichyo u fellw ill not be extinguished,
although t thousands of voices cross this silence.
The rain will soak the stones of the square,
yet shall not put out your names of fire.*

*A thousand nights shall come with dark wings,
without destroying the day that these dead await.*

*The day we await all around the world
so many men, the final day of suffering.*

*A day of justice conquered in the struggle,
and you, my fallen brothers and sisters, in silence,*

*Will be together with us on that grand day
of the final struggle, on that immense day.*

Pablo Neruda

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Resignification of the maternal role and social protagonism

Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon

The women in Argentina have had an important participation in social and political life, which has been minimized in our official history. As from the middle of the 20th century, this participation acquired massive characteristics. Their direct insertion in production as well as in the political conditions of the period have a lot to do with this irruption, which later will have many social conquests as a result. Later on, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo will become the public expression and synthesis of the anti-dictatorial resistance of the Argentine people. The maternal role will thus be resignified in its double dimension, singular and collective, and will have an instituting role as a model of social response. This model will leave recognizable imprints in other social movements which appeared later on.

“Our children gave birth to us”: in the final period of the military dictatorship, the Mothers coined this expression which gave foundation to the birth of a new maternal subjectivity. As from the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and through their social practice, the maternal role was re-signified with the construction of new meanings and significations. *“Our children gave birth to us”* summarizes the foundational moment of a new conception in Argentina of a woman-mother, who from the confinement of domestic life makes a violent irruption into the public scene. Up to that moment, even when the struggle of women had obtained important conquests – as the vote for women, boosted by Evita Peron –, the contradiction between motherhood and personal development was almost antagonistic. Censorship, criticism in relation to the supposed abandonment of the children in function of personal development or work, even due to necessity, not only came from the dominating discourses and common sense (which is its particularized expression) but also from the internalization in women and generated intense feelings of guilt.

Most of the Mothers belonged to a generation of housewives. Their participation in the anti-dictatorial resistance transformed them into *new* women with respect to how they had been before. Their public presence

arises from a necessity: to find their children. This unwavering decision allowed them to gather together quickly, even in the most adverse conditions, meeting at places where they went in search of the answers to their claims.

An element present in the hegemonic social representations that makes the maternal figure sacred was the supposed assumption that the condition of being a woman and a mother was protective, that this would make them safer from the repression of the dictatorship than if they were men. At least this was one of the explanations that spontaneously arose before the repeated question of “Why mothers and not fathers?”.

“*Do something*” is the phrase that appears in an image that has gone all over the world, an image of a mother with her kerchief on her head, who is talking to foreign journalists during the Soccer World Cup of 1978. A paradox of subjectivity: it is precisely at the time that their actions become instituting, yet it still hasn’t been incorporated by the Mothers in its real dimension that their claim can be taken up by others. When their practice leads them to the comprehension of the role of the State they learn, from that same practice, the revolutionary or transforming concept that guided the actions of their children. From considering their children innocent victims, they start to value the life choices their children made, to respect them and, in many cases, identify themselves with their ideals, through the process of conscious subjectivization.

Before, they had said: “*we will collectivize motherhood*”, to refer to the painful but necessary passage, imposed by reality, to have comprehended that they had to pass from looking for their own missing child to everyone’s missing child. From practice to conscious elaboration, from concrete actions to symbolization, to the production of ideas, of models, contents, significations, which gave place to a new form of subjectivity.

In this process, the women/mothers decisively contributed to the construction of counter-hegemonic social representations, which will be points of identifying anchorage with respect to a collective response to the new generations of women who would go through critical or traumatic social situations. The instituting action of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo during the dictatorship constitutes, thus, an excellent analyzer that re-examines the problems of the maternal role in relation to the social practice of women with their subjective productions in our country, in the contemporary period.

We consider the representation of motherhood as a symbolic function, in which desire is inscribed within the framework of a social structure. It is,

then, different according to the historic period and culture in which it takes place. We understand subjectivity as the different ways of feeling, thinking, acting, giving significations to the world. It is, just like the concept of motherhood, a historic-social production, which recognizes a collective aspect and an individual aspect, an aspect related to what is public and social and an aspect which is intimate and private. This construction of subjectivity is produced in the interior of material and social relationships which condition it and, many times, overdetermine it.

We coincide with S. Bleichmar (2004) in that the production of subjectivity creates the mode in which societies determine the forms with which subjects are constituted that are plausible to integrate themselves into the systems that grant them a place: *“It is the place where the social enunciations with respect to the Ego are articulated”*.

If we consider that social belonging is a undeniable phenomenon, and as P. Aulagnier (1977) affirms, the narcissistic contract ties the subject to the order of the culture he pertains to guaranteeing him the recognition of that belonging in exchange for his commitment to the transmission of the values and models of that culture – we can deduce from this concept that the subjectivity of each epoch is marked by the ideals, habits, norms, and hegemonic ideas of that period.

The dominating discourse(s) is/are also expressed in social representations and in identifying statements, which are spontaneously taken up by the people as from the necessity to be recognized as members of a determined society. The combinations of statements act in the social net through social systems of representation.

Usually the social system is presented phenomenally through forms that conceal the internal laws of their functioning. E. Guinsberg emphasizes the importance which the knowledge of subjective processes has for the implementation of social control – central operation for the construction of the “necessary man” for the maintenance and reproduction of all social systems.

From the historic perspective of subjectivity, the new experiences of a people or a culture oblige the subject and the groups where the subject participates to do a work of elaboration. This elaborative work implies the search of recuperation, re-composition and re-creation of aspects of identity, which can and must be simultaneously carried out in what is personal and specific in each one of us as well as in the order of social belonging and processing.

It is precisely the counter-hegemonic social practices, as were the practices of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo during the dictatorship, the ones that allowed the questioning of the dominant ideology and also allowed the creation of new social representations and new discourses. These enter into conflict and fight over the contents and the collective forms of subjectivity, producing an instituting effect in the social body, transforming themselves and bringing forth new sense and significations to the problems of gender.

In our history, the women took upon themselves a commitment with the social and political struggle. And although many of these women were real political stories in themselves, epic history situates them predominantly as from their contribution from the domestic scenario: *“they gave their children to the fight for freedom”*, *“they sewed the flags for the war of independence”*, *“they offered a space in their home for conspiratorial meetings”*. As you can see, they are located in a place of subordination and a lack of autonomy. There are exceptional cases, like those of Juana Azurduy and Machaca Güemes, who as women of those times were recognized in the public scene in a place of autonomy and of relevant decision-making.

In the XXth century, the massive entrance of women into production and their struggles contributed to putting patriarchal models in crisis. As a consequence, they obtained important conquests, which in turn, left imprints in feminine subjectivity. However, as changes in subjectivity are always accompanied after material conquests, this change in the social role did not necessarily lead to a substantial modification of the social representation of women on the part of the whole of society, of man or of ourselves: women.

In effect, *“...men make their own history, but they do not do it by their own free will, under circumstances chosen by them, but rather under those circumstances with which they find themselves directly involved, which exist and which have been left to them from those in the past. The traditions of all the dead generations oppress the brains of the living like a nightmare”* (Marx, 1852).

Closer or further away from the achievements we women have obtained as from work and struggle, the place of motherhood is still considered as something fixed within private life. We could have, in many aspects, an independent life, but the maternal role was reserved for an intimate space in which what was public was a strange territory. To be a *mother* was a *sacred* place, yet it marked a fate of inequality.

Just in the 1970's, we find ourselves with the imprint, which we have already pointed out, of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. When they installed

themselves in the public square, in the social and political field, they promoted the ideal of justice in relation to that historic period in the collective consciousness and also redefined models concerning the role of women and of motherhood.

This process took place and takes place within a framework of contradictions, since the social representations and the dominant concept about woman and her maternal role co-exist and are permanently in conflict. Even today, subjectively, we have an important conflict between the irruption in the public scene and the claims of a private life which place us as the responsible party of the domestic universe.

As from the founding mark of the Mothers, a new stage was opened in which, besides other modes of social participation, the problem of the maternal role stops being separated, disassociated, condemned to domestic exile, to an exile within the house, and starts to occupy a privileged place in the social scene. This is especially true in relation to the social problems related to their children, the young adults. It is thus, that the mother of María Soledad, the Mothers of Pain, the mothers of trigger-happy victims, the mothers of drug-addicted children, the mothers who denounce the rape of their daughters or their abduction for prostitution or another similar fate, take upon themselves a social protagonism from the place which before had been sacred.

After María Soledad Morales's murder in Catamarca, a socially organized response was organized by the parents, especially the mother, the religious director of the school and her classmates. In an obstinate clamor for justice, this movement was questioned during the times of Due Obedience and by the submission instituted by the feudal power. The Marches of Silence carried out every Thursday with thousands of people, suggest that historic memory was still in force; and it also modified hegemonic representations in that province. This movement, as well as the counter-hegemonic social representations that it produced, was constituted into a real psychosocial organizer, fulfilling social and psychic functions. It made public certain hidden aspects – secrets known to all – of the estates of power in the province; it questioned the natural right of the life and death of the *common people*, on the body of a common woman, the double relationship of vassal (master and vassal, and subjugation to the right of justice) sustained by the hegemonic group in power, constituted by one single family – who dominated all the economic resources – and their entourage.

The mothers of trigger-happy victims denounced indiscriminate repression to their children for the crime of being young and poor. The mothers of drug addicted children face the problem of drugs in their children, and along this path they denounce drug-trafficking and its complicities and state and police intricacies. While teachers abandon their “apostolic teaching” to recognize themselves as part of the salaried working class, the women-mothers fulfill a role of instituting denouncement from their specific role as mothers.

In the case of women who are pickets, faced with the problem of unemployment (a problem which today acquires a new relevance) and the desperation of condemning their children to hunger; they have taken upon themselves the double role of workers and mothers and collectively face the situation by occupying streets and organizing soup kitchens. In this process, in which profound changes were produced in the family structure, they modified their subjective constellation, breaking away from the classic model of the submissive woman, subjected to man – a mere subsidiary of his.

Faced with the dominant discourse that placed the responsibility of unemployment on those who were its victims, and which induced to the internalization and identification of these ideas, the social response of these women – in their double condition of subject and co-responsible party in the family nucleus – constructed a new sense to their lives in this world and obtained the recognition of their rights.

All these examples put into evidence that the social practice exercised from the place of the mothers leads us, women, to go unraveling complex social phenomena.

In the course of social practices, which clamor and appeal to the State, the women-mothers, from different perspectives and concrete situations, contribute to the production of new social representations that synthesize these practices and which go constructing – in contradictory and difficult comings and goings – counter-hegemonic social consensus. This simultaneously offers the psyche the possibility of constructing a new sense to things, questioning them, thus producing new forms of subjectivity of gender which are strong and of a transforming capacity. Social practice is the starting point of the construction of new ideas and discourses. What began as a search to a solution to concrete problems turned into the re-definition of new models and collective ideas.

Many times (though not as a general rule) we find ourselves faced with a paradox: at the moment of greatest attack to the Ego, at the moment of greatest devastation, the social practice that arises to confront the problem,

even when it does not give back what has been lost nor erase the suffering or totally solve the subject whose search for a solution has been the engine of the action undertaken; it takes on a nurturing function that helps women to show and acquire new skills and resources, which allows them to semanticize what they have lived under a new and broader perspective, deepening the comprehension of the events and re-situating themselves before them. This acquisition of new skills puts mental processes of great complexity into action, such as the capacity of analysis, the capacity of synthesis, the capacity of anticipation and the incorporation of new values and ideas.

We coincide with Janine Puget (2002) when she affirms that solidarity is “... *a specific relationship production, something that is done with another person (or persons) in a public space, when the necessity or the desire to do something appears in relation to a problem that is defined in each moment, in each context and leaves a query*” (Page 117). From the necessity to solve a common problem, an identifying *us* is generated, an *us* that would have the linking quality which Sara Moscona (2001) gives to the solidarity-fraternal relationship.

To be effective, solidarity requires an adequate solution of the tension, of the conflict between belonging and individualization. Thus conceived, both solidarity and love towards one's children can be situated as from a perspective that not only transcends, but enters into contradiction with the narrowness of the familial concept of love and devotes itself entirely to the *peripeteia* of collective action in the public sector.

Social practice, grouping put into action, has proven itself to be a necessary vehicle in order to be able to question and move out alienating ideas and representations; and to mobilize and produce new social statements. Alienation, the process in which a subject takes upon himself the discourse of the alienating force and becomes its spokesperson, is a psycho-social phenomenon par excellence. It covers a group, passing at the same time inadvertently for the subjects who it has affected. Likewise, and in an inverse path, the de-alienating process is also a collective one, protagonized by those who carry out a social practice, a practice which also affects the symbolic elaboration in the others who do not participate in this social practice, but for whom it functions as a reference.

Social representations and the counter-hegemonic discourses and statements have a constitutive role in the collective forms of subjectivity. In turn, the interaction with the other helps to give back to the subject his sameness surreptitiously altered, and fundamentally grants the consciousness of that

alteration. In this manner, it is possible to make a different reading that allows one to define principles of reality that are collectively consented, and upon which positions, ideas, lived experiences and actions are developed, as well as threatening and guilt-ridden fantasies are elaborated.

On its side, this grouping offers the possibility of re-sustainment or re-support. Individual psychism finds in social ties – expressed through multiple mediations – an indispensable support to maintain its integrity and functioning. It can be restituted, recreated as from the participation in a collective experience.

The active grouping in critical situations protects one from feelings of defencelessness, non-action, abandonment and from the fear of psychic de-structuring.

In the process of change which we have referred to, a contradiction between motherhood and personal and social development exists. And although this contraction has not been resolved and has varied manifestations in men and women, the social movements to which we have referred to, supported in the recognition of the new social necessities with respect to the maternal role, have had and still have a decisive role in the de-naturalization and questioning that motherhood is only something that belongs to the orbit of private life. In this case, the contractions, that continue to be present, stop having the antagonism which used to characterize them.

There are many experiences of gender struggle which have changed the objective and subjective panorama in our lives. However, while the oppressive system and the exploitation of classes persist, the problems of gender cannot be solved from the point of view of a profoundly qualitative transformation.

We consider the problem of the oppression of women contains a specificity, and at the same time it is inscribed within the problems of the struggle of classes; that is to say, that gender oppression is a subsidiary of class oppression. We define ourselves clearly by considering that it is the social structure based on division of social classes which determines oppression and exploitation as the fundamental factors which operate on the problems of gender. We do not, therefore, agree with the readings which we feel conceal social structure, that reduce the problems of gender as well as other social problems, to human rights issues.

The origin of the concept of Human Rights comes from the bourgeois revolution and has as its premise, equality among all human beings and the defence of the sacred right to private property, which is precisely the es-

sence of inequality. What was a forward leap in historic development today is a backward leap, since it implies the conscious or non-conscious defence of capitalism. In the fight against the dictatorship and impunity in Argentina, the term Human Rights was taken up by the popular movements and acquired a profound general sense of clamor towards the State. However, we believe that its extrapolation to fields which have a different sense of logic covers up the just claims of the movement for the rights of women, as well as other social rights.

The rich experience of social movements that we, women, protagonize at different levels is an indispensable element for the resolution of our problems of gender, as well as for opening a way which will allow us to end oppression and exploitation.

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Cultural production: contributions from films to the psychosocial processing of collective traumas

Silvana Bekerman

*To narrate well means: to do it in such a manner so as to
be listened to. We will not achieve it without some subterfuge.*

Sufficient subterfuge so it becomes an art!

Jorge Semprun, *La escritura o la vida*

Late, almost at night, in 1981, while I was leaving work I thought about going to see a film in order to relax and distract myself a bit. The chosen film: a police drama *Tiempo de Revancha (Time for Revenge)* (1981, Adolfo Aristarain).

In truth, I don't think that the genre with which the film was publicized was correct. Plus I didn't relax or distract myself at all. Yet I came out of the film with a smile that came from very deep inside of me. It was not a smile of happiness; it was like a feeling of beginning to recuperate something very valuable, albeit painful, which I could not have defined.

I felt as if I had started on the path of an essential journey of encounters and re-encounters, that would continue with different intensities and directions until today, since the path does not lead to one specific place but to many.

This was a trip that began that day in loneliness and that thousands and thousands of travelling companions joined and who multiply themselves every day, whether as protagonists, or as accompanying travelers, with a greater or lesser consciousness of their participation.

Introduction

The considerations that will be stated in this article take into account the productions of what is collective that we have defined in EATIP and which aim it is to think about, from the perspective of those of us who

psychologically work with those directly affected by the dictatorship, of the first and second generations (corresponding to the children) in the role of artistic-cultural production – in this case, cinematographic – in the processing of traumatic situations of social origin.

We will specifically refer to the systematic human rights violations that were carried out during the last military dictatorship and to the permanence of this subject as a continuous present, given the pending debt which in this sense justice has with all our people.

All along this article we will refer to different films, characterizing them as forming part of the commercial circuit or as part of independent film-making. This definition does not state a judgment of value, it just tries to establish that the possibility of entering into the environment of commercial film-making gives the film a greater opportunity of reaching a bigger audience, which in itself, constitutes a factor of weight in the collective approach to what happened during the period of State terrorism.

On their part, the productions pertaining to independent film-making, although much less advertised as they have a tighter budget, present a particular quality: frequently they become instruments of enormous value to reflect upon these subjects in small groups – in which sometimes the film-makers and protagonists themselves also participate. All this enriches the subsequent debates and group elaboration. Many times they are also screened in secondary schools, universities, social and cultural organizations as material of transmission and debate about what occurred in that period.

It is not the objective of this article to give a total account of the material filmed which is related to political repression which, given its extension, has been impossible for me to see all of them. Of the ones I have been able to see, I will only refer to a few of them in order to illustrate the role films have from a psychosocial perspective, without any intention of underestimating those films which I do not mention.

Although it is obvious, it is necessary to clarify that the selection of films and the analysis carried out are not random, naïve or neutral. Undoubtedly, my own subjectivity is expressed in the considerations expressed along this written work, with the particular imprint that this inescapable fact supposes.

The material will be presented in two parts: in the first part, we will make a detailed analysis of the film *Tiempo de Revancha*, as we consider it a paradigmatic work of cinematographic production made during the dic-

tatorship. In the second part, we will examine some of films of the post-dictatorship period up to the present time, where the different approached subjects are reflected in different historic moments.

Tiempo de Revancha

In his book *La Memoria Agitada (Distressed Memory)*, Francisco Javier Millán (2001) makes a brief reconstruction of the events which occurred in the years previous to the coup d'état of 1976 and sustains that *during the first years of the dictatorship, Argentine film-making omitted reality as a consequence of the process of destruction and annihilation of the memory which we refer to*" (page 107). Possibly, the "omission" to which the author refers to is, in reality, a manifestation of social and political repression that affected the whole of the Argentine society in those times, among which are the makers of the different forms of artistic and cultural production. Repression, which, added to the processes of social alienation and censorship imposed from the dominant power on the means of communication (including anything related to artistic-cultural productions), resulted in a limited cinematographic expression which expressed, in a direct manner, the reality we were living.

After these first years, Argentine film-making found in the resources of allegories, the manner of being able to narrate what was happening in the daily life of the Argentine people. In the text which I previously quoted, the writer affirms "... *film-making (during the dictatorship) shows through stories of fiction, oppressive sub-worlds where the relationship between the characters is marked by domination and the persecution of external elements, and where the freedom of the individuals appears restricted by other superior forces, that present themselves in a concealed manner and without faces*" (Millán, 2001, page 109).

In consonance with these observations, in the last years of the dictatorship, valuable films approached subjects related to the repressive situation, with the economic model imposed by the government and with the corruption from the high echelons of the dictatorial power, using metaphors or allegories. Films which have these methodologies, among others, were *La Isla (The Island)* (1978, Alejandro Doria); *El Poder de las Tinieblas (The Power of Darkness)* (1979, Mario Sábato); *Los Miedos (Fears)* (1980, Alejandro Doria); *Tiempo de Revancha (Time of Revenge)* (1981, Adolfo Aristarain); *Ultimos Días de la Víctima (Last Days of the Victim)* (1982, Adolfo Aristarain); *Plata Dulce (Sweet Money)* (1982, Fernando Ayala).

The decision of taking *Tiempo de Revancha* as our starting point has to do, besides the personal signification mentioned earlier, with the social impact that it had, which permits those who see it to read between the lines about allusions to State terrorism.

The film is about a man hired to work as a dynamite expert by a multinational company. While he is working and becoming more familiar with the economic-working policies of the company, which do nothing for the basic security of its workers, the protagonist, with the idea of collecting a compensation, pretends to have become mute as a consequence of an emotional shock produced by an irresponsible explosion ordered by his superiors. In the explosion, several workers had died. However, as from the explosion, this character suffers an intense internal transformation and decides to denounce the company before the law due to the death of his working companions which was caused by the deplorable working conditions. He wins the lawsuit, but is permanently harassed and threatened by the employers, who see some fraudulent trick in his muteness. Faced with the incessant harassment, in the dramatic last scene the protagonist decides to cut off his tongue: they would not then be able to say that his muteness is not real. The message is clear: nobody will make him talk.

From the very beginning the film shows aspects of the reality that were being lived in Argentina during the last military dictatorship. It uses the necessity of the protagonist to reinsert himself in the working circuit to deploy a scenario where the problems of submission or resistance to authority can be clearly seen – in this case to the employers. To be able to enrich themselves, and in connivance with the economic plan developed by the established power, the owners of the company resolve to use corruption, terror, manipulation and the decision on the life and death of their workers.

In an impressive metaphor on dictatorial power, during the whole film one can appreciate scenes of numerous subjects which up to that moment our society was not able to speak about in a direct manner. Thus at the beginning of the movie, the present time for the protagonist, when to get a job he must erase part of his identity by silencing his previous personal history of struggle and union activism (at one moment he is asked about his political views, and the character responds: “*politics is for politicians*”), we see all this as spectators and accompany him along the path to recuperate the values and ideals he had previously supported. During this path, a profound change takes place in his feelings, thoughts and actions and he

commits all his life to the process. It is essential in this story to reinstate the value of words and silence that can also be understood as a powerful manner of talking or expressing.

These two resources (words and silence), which up to that moment had been a heritage of the owners of the company, become the basic weapons of the protagonist, who with his self-imposed muteness, effectively denounces the violence exercised by the power of the businessmen. He appropriates his right to speak or remain silent and, in reality, we can think that that which comes forth from the title of the film stated as a vengeance, constitutes a real act of justice.

Numerous oral expressions ("*I only obey orders*", affirms one of the high-ranking employees) and some attitudes (such as covering one's mouth with duct tape the protagonist does it to remind himself that he must not talk: a symbolic allusion to the silence the dictatorship imposed on the social body and the real gags used on those abducted and kept in the clandestine centres of detention) are some of the modalities in which, through this personal history, the film uncovers what is collectively known as well as what is not known, silenced or denied.

A fiction which creates the possibility of showing many aspects of reality through the loopholes of the system, makes *Tiempo de Revancha* a highly representative film of its epoch.

Films and Constitutional Governments

As from 1983, with the first constitutional government, a prolific period of cinematography related to the subject of the dictatorship commences. It is no longer necessary to recur to purely fictional stories nor to metaphors as modes to elude censorship: theoretically it was beginning to be possible to talk openly and directly about what had happened. However, this would be a long and complex process. The mandate of silence imposed by the dictatorship, the fear, the pain for the multiple losses suffered that strongly impregnated the first post-dictatorial years were giving place, with the passing of time, to the necessity to think, show and talk about different aspects of the lived history. Thus, numerous problems started to arise publically in the means of communication, collaborating with the possibility of installing these issues in the social scene.

From cinematography, subjects such as forced disappearance is approached as well as the existence of clandestine centres of detention, tor-

ture and extermination; exile; the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo; the children of the missing-detainees; the appropriation of children; and internal displacement.

Whether it is in a documentary, testimony, fiction or story where the central plot is developed around different subjects yet makes reference to, for example, how political repression affects the life of some characters (for instance in *Buenos Aires, Viceversa* (1996, *Alejandro Agresti*), these problems have reflected in the films the place they actually occupied in daily life.

This process of historization, of the construction of collective memory, the search for the sense to what occurred and the saving of the previous political and social struggles, were originated both in individual necessity as well as in the collective necessity of a whole people to go structuring the modes of elaborating the lived traumatic experiences. In this sense, the different artistic productions, and film-making as one of its contributions, were and will continue to be an extraordinary means of showing State terrorism and the effects that human rights violations had on each and every one of us.

With its multiple social role: denouncement, interpellation, interrogation, construction of memory, instrument of struggle, mode of resistance, and historic document, the cinematography associated to these subjects fulfills an important role in the construction of subjectivity. From the psychosocial viewpoint, one can conceive cinematographic production as an exponent of interplay where each element is intertwined with and permits the existence of the other. Film-making is a factor that is part of the collective elaboration of traumatic situations of social origin, while at the same time, it constitutes a product of this processing and of the struggle and resistance that these events put into movement.

As a cultural emergent, the productions that were made from the end of the dictatorship up to the present have not followed a linear progression, rather they have accompanied and participated in the different moments that have affected our society, reflecting the ongoing social processes. Therefore, each production will have the imprint of the dominant ideology in the historic period in which it is made. And although most of these productions show different aspects that make up a denouncement, a testimony, the construction of memory, among others, with the objective of facilitating its reading, we are going to show these subjects by ordering the material into different categories, and highlighting in each one some issue in particular.

“We are all responsible”

At the beginning of the first constitutional government, the film “*La Historia Oficial (The Official Story)*” (1984-85, Luis Puenzo) was filmed. This was a story of fiction centered on the path covered by a woman, who in 1983, and because of the return of a friend who had gone into exile, finds herself confronted with doubts about the origin of her adopted daughter. Thus the subject of the appropriation of children of the missing-detainees is brought forth and their articulation as part of the systematic and repressive actions of the dictatorship: the protagonist is presented. She is the wife of a businessman who has strong ties with the Armed Forces, and from a totally naïve, unknown and surprising point of view confronts the possibility that her child might in reality be an *appropriated* child, and also confronts the multiple human rights violations carried out by the dictatorial power.

This particular mode of *ignorance* on the part of the protagonist reflects a sort of complicity which is not totally unconscious: in fact, from her place as the wife of a man linked to power and an accomplice of this power, she certainly had the possibility to know what was happening in the country at that moment. However she adopts a mild position when faced with these events even when she intuitively thinks they are part of a concealed truth, and does not want to find out more about what was happening or to question the methods that were used.

While the plot develops, the protagonist *realizes* what has occurred and starts to go through an internal transformation which will make her break away from the life she had had up to that moment. In a parallel manner to the protagonist’s path in this period of her life, the character representing her husband confides to his wife, at the time that the dictatorship is falling apart, all about the hidden betrayals and complicities of the members in power, who are frantically looking for an escape to the debacle that is ongoing.

Besides the appropriation of the children of the missing-detainees, other issues that were made invisible or were denied by State terrorism (the disappearance of people, torture, exile, the legitimacy of the claim of various groups such as the Mothers and Grandmothers) are also approached in the film. In this historic period of the country, denial, ignorance and the guilt of the victims begin to fall – the official versions imposed by the dictatorship start to be questioned –, to give way to the acknowledgement, on the part of society, of the atrocities committed.

This production represents part of the collective necessity of starting to deal with these issues and doubts, and the widespread circulation of this film within the commercial sphere allowed it to reach a massive audience and thus, have a wide public repercussion. On the other hand, the proposed perspective of *La Historia Oficial*, made a short time after the beginning of the first constitutional government, reproduces a representative look on the dominant discourse of those times²⁰. Two points should be mentioned in more detail. One of them is that associated to the tendency brought forth from the government, to consider the social body as an accomplice to the human rights violations committed by the military dictatorship. The slogan *We all are responsible* expressed this type of thinking: to a greater or lesser degree, we would all have some level of guilt – thus bundling together the real responsible parties and their accomplices with everyone else in the confusion of the *all*, with the flip side of it which states *nobody is really responsible and should not be condemned for this*. (In fact, as was proven in the trial against the military juntas, the legal condemnation was only applied to the members of the first military juntas).

This position of placing guilt implies not knowing about the phenomenon of social alienation that was present during the dictatorship with the subsequent putting into force, on the part of the subjects, of defensive mechanisms such as denial, disassociation and re-denial. All this is supported in the concealment of reality which had been carried out by the means of communication controlled by the State, and in social fragmentation, which greatly hindered having access to information about what was happening during the period of State terrorism. Under no circumstance would this situation allow one to speak of complicity on the part of the immense majority of the population.

It is important to point out the difference of this event from the scenario depicted in the film: here the protagonist, given the antagonistic conflict that arises – against her own interests – of finding out the real origin of her daughter, *chooses*, in the first years, not to find out the truth even though she has the possibility to do so. In this case, even when there have been some denied aspects of reality, these co-exist with a certain level of complicity in this character.

20 For a deeper analysis on the campaigns of psychological induction of the dictatorship, please refer to the article “Psychological effects of political repression I”, by D. Kordon and L. Edelman in *Psychological effects of political repression*.

The second representative point of the historic moment and of the dominant discourse of the time in which *La Historia Oficial* was filmed has to do with what the *theory of the two demons* reproduces, and which was tried to be imposed within society within the framework of the construction of the system of impunity of the post-dictatorship period. This theory sustains that there had been a war in this country, with which they tried to equate the repressive action of State terrorism with the actions carried out by armed political organizations. In the film, the following dialogue shows a parallelism between a former (woman) political activist and the husband of the protagonist, supporter of the hegemonic power and an accomplice of dictatorial violence: “*He* (says the woman in reference to a former activist who disappeared) *was just like you...the flip side of the coin*”. The theory of the two demons without using euphemisms.

With the passing of time, this posture has been more and more questioned by society, and now remains almost exclusively within those sectors which are ideologically in agreement with the dictatorship.

The considerations that I have made up to here in reference to this film manifest the different elements that make *La Historia Oficial* an emblematic work of the first years of constitutional government.

Exile

Another subject approached at the beginning of the post-dictatorship period, with an important reach to the social body, is that which was stated in *Tangos. El Exilio de Gardel (Gardel's Exile)* (1986, Fernando Solanas): the uprooting, the pain over loss, the homesickness for one's country, the insertion into a new country, are some of the aspects that are included around the situation of exile.

Later on, these problems, like those of the former missing-detainees of the dictatorship (some of who remained in prison several years after the recuperation of the constitutional government), have not been frequently treated subjects in films, both commercial and independent ones. It is possible that this fact is related to the absence of a preponderant social place for these situations, with respect to individual, collective and institutional recognition, as a traumatic affectation. On the other hand, we must also consider the different times and modes of processing required for the different forms of political repression, which are made present in the public scene with different intensities over time.

During these last years, both issues seem to have gone through a more active period of elaboration, which can be observed in the establishing of groups formally constituted such as Children of Exile (*Hijos del Exilio*) or in group activities carried out by former political prisoners, some of whom depict their experiences of re-encounter and collective work in literary works and films.

Testimony

Already from the first times of the constitutional stage, the role of giving testimony has taken up a fundamental place in film-making.

According to the Spanish dictionary of Espasa-Calpe, the word testimony is defined as “declaration in which something is affirmed or assured”; and to give testimony as “to declare, to give an example or demonstration of something”.

Specifically in reference to the events that occurred during the dictatorship, with these terms we make reference to the fact of putting words where there had been silence: to make known what happened and had been perversely concealed or denied from the hegemonic power, thus favouring ignorance and inducing to the denial of reality on the part of the population in general. One could say that, from a social function, testimony searches to demolish this implacable logic put at the service of the dictatorial government, with which they try to cover up what really happened with a blanket of silence and thus assure the impunity of the perpetrators.

But also, to give testimony means that there is another person listening, who receives the words, those stories which frequently include painfully lived experiences in the most absolute loneliness, even when many times they were shared by others in the same situation. Faced with this, I think the words of Jorge Semprun are quite appropriate: “*The real problem does not lie in telling the things, no matter how difficult they were. The real problem is in listening to them...Are you willing to listen to our stories, even if we tell them well?*” (1995: 140).

So that from giving testimony there is an interlocutor, someone to whom the words will make him know determined events, at the same time that this person will be questioned in his position as a spectator or witness of what is being said. What will then happen to him once he listens or sees the testimony? How will he process those stories which, sometimes from what is individual and in others from what is collective, show fragments of reality that, in different modes, affect all of us?

In the post-dictatorial period the voices of those directly affected by political repression start to feel strengthened, in a reciprocal movement where the process of social de-alienation starts giving place to let the words be heard, at the same time that the stories go discovering – each time more – what has been denied and silenced, thus favouring individual and collective awareness.

An example of this are the films based on the testimonies made by the relatives of those that disappeared (for instance, *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, 1984-85, Lourdes Portillo and Susana Muñoz), accompanied by real footage of some operations of abductions and detention that had hardly been shown up to then. Then it is no longer possible to say I didn't see anything. Now, we all begin to see, to listen to, to feel, to think.

With the passing of time, other films add their contributions to the construction of the *other story* about our recent past. Among them is, *Botín de Guerra (War Booty)* (1996, David Blaustein) who shows from the testimony of conformity, the development and functioning of the activities of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo as well as the problem of the appropriation of the children of the missing-detainees by people linked to the repressive forces.

Another example of this type of film, which is strongly based on testimony is *Los Malditos Caminos (The Damned Paths)* (2002, Luis Barone), which narrates the story of Father Mugica and the social work he carried out in the slum Villa 31 in Retiro.

Denouncement

Many films have narrated, as from individual stories (whether autobiographical or fictional), the diverse forms of repressive action of the dictatorship as a mode of denouncement. Among them, and within those that reached great repercussion, is *La Noche de los Lapices (The Night of the Pencils)* (1986, Hector Olivera), which narrates the real story of a group of students that were abducted in September, 1976. These students were fighting for a *student bus ticket*: only one survived and managed to tell the story of what happened. This film, widely broadcast on TV over the last years, shows the crude truth of the terrible experience lived by these adolescents, making the spectator go through profound anguish and grief. Undoubtedly, the young age of the protagonists and the characteristics of vindication for which they fought imprinted this dramatic story with an outstanding place of recognition on the social plane.

Another film is *Garage Olimpo (Olimpo Garage)* (1999, Marco Bechís), a story of fiction that brings forth different aspects of concentration camp life and of the logic which at the service of achieving the objectives of the dictatorship, affects its functioning. It shows the repressors in the place of masters and owners of those who are detained, using torture, rape and all types of abusive and degrading actions, as well as the psychological manipulation of these same people, trying to break the resistance and the identity of the prisoners.

One of the greatest elements of impact in this film is that it shows the massive social denial of one of the most sinister forms of the murder of people carried out by the dictatorship, in spite of the evidence brought forth from public information which made one think of the possibility that something like that could be occurring (frequent appearance of corpses floating near the banks of the Rio de la Plata on the Argentine or Uruguayan coast).

This modality called *flights of death* – where people who were alive and drugged were thrown into the river from planes belonging to the Air Force –, given the great number of spectators of this film, collaborated in the installation of these subjects within the public scene and the collective processing of information communicated through this movie.

We could say that these two films *Garage Olimpo* and *La Noche de los Lápicos*, from the commercial level complement the numerous films which, in an independent manner and over the years, have been showing the terrible human rights violations that were carried out.

Some of these independent productions also document what happened to adolescents and young students during the period of State terrorism, for example, *Flores de Septiembre (Flowers of September)* (2003, Pablo Osores, Roberto Testa and Nicolás Wainszelbaum), which tells the story of the disappearance of some students from the Superior School of Commerce Carlos Pellegrini (*Escuela Superior de Comercio Carlos Pellegrini*), in what simultaneously constitutes a homage to the lives of these activists and an instrument of work with the following generations of young adults for the collective elaboration of these traumatic events.

Historic Memory

As from 1983, numerous productions – mostly independent – deal with the subject of the former missing-detainees. Their testimonies tell about the experiences they lived through while in captivity. On many occasions,

besides, they form part of productions which tell the story of the social or political organization they belonged to, thus revaluing their former struggles and ideals. Among the many films of this kind is *Cazadores de Utopías (Hunters of Utopias)* (1995-96, David Blaustein), which forms part of the filmography with a tendency to the historic reconstruction of the period before the coup of 1976.

Another film worth mentioning is *M* (2002, Nicolás Prividera), in which the director goes to the INTA (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria – National Institute of Agricultural/Cattle Technology) to talk to the activist companions of his missing mother, trying to reconstruct not only the memories these people have of her, but also the functioning and the setup of the organizations that politically worked there in the period before the dictatorship.

I would also like to mention the film by Marcelo Céspedes and Carmen Guarini made in 2002, entitled *H.I.J.O.S. El Alma en Dos – (H.I.J.O.S. The Soul in Two)*, a story where various things converge, such as, the organization constituted by the children of the missing-detainees, the social practices that this collective organization has brought forth since its establishment being the escraches or public writings or denouncements one of the counter-hegemonic social representations created by this group, as well as the diverse functions that the organization carries out, both at the personal level for its members (as emotional support, place of belonging and reference, promoter of the development of one's own identity, among others) as well as the social level, and in this manner it also contributes to the construction of collective memory, actively participating in the daily struggle for justice.

In the last years there have been many productions that have also permanently contributed to these efforts. Thus, the film *Madres (Mothers)* (2007, Eduardo Walger) constitutes a valuable reference (through the voices of these women) of the historic context in which the popular struggles developed in our country from 1955 up to the present. A collective narrative is constituted by articulating fragments of the personal history of each one of the interviewed mothers in this film where 17 of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo bring forth the lives and struggles of their missing children: the permanent denouncement, the untiring search, the grief transformed into struggle and learning, the support in what is social – are only some of the themes brought up in this film.

The annulment of the laws of impunity, the beginning of the trials against

the repressors and the first conviction to a genocidaire, all achievements obtained by the popular movements, are reflected in these films as well as the necessity to continue in the struggle for justice and against impunity which is still in force.

Insilio (or internal displacement)

A special mention must be made of the extensive cinematographic work carried out in relation to the children of the missing-detainees, the second generation of those affected by State terrorism; where it is possible to observe different aspects that affect this condition of being the *children* along the various stages of their lives.

And although the term *hijos – children* alludes to common problems they all have as a group, there is the particular manner in which each one of them lived this condition and the what it meant to be a child of a missing-detainee. The experiences have been very varied and complex and the films reflect all of this.

Some of these stories have been eloquently reflected in the film *Kamchatka* (2002, Marcelo Piñeiro): from the point of view of a child, the life of a family living clandestinely during the dictatorship is depicted, previously to the disappearance of his parents. Sadness, loss, fear, solitude, pain, grief strongly impregnate the story of the protagonist, recreating a climate that also manifests love, joy and the tenderness in the relationship with his parents as well as their concern for the security and care of the children.

During the narration, the protagonist, over-adapting himself to the situations he must live and having to take upon himself some functions that exceed his capacity as a child, points out the valuable legacy of an attitude to fight and resist in life, symbolically transmitted by his father through a board game of war and survival called T.E.G. (Tactics and Strategies of War). The film ends on the note of the child understanding the meaning of the received legacy, expressed in the last sentence: “Kamchatka” – one of the countries in the game – “*it is the place where one resists*”.

Although a piece of fiction, the plot that is developed describes the situation lived by thousands of children, not only those of missing-detainee parents and not only of those whose families lived clandestinely, but by those who lived through the experience of internal displacement where, while preserving certain aspects of their identity (for example, names, schools),

they had to conceal important parts of their personal and family lives due to matters of security.

The solid statement of this issue in the film has made an intense impact in many adult children, who felt themselves strongly identified with their lived situations as young children.

Conformation of one's identity

Another issue which has been depicted in the last years in various films is the process which the children of the missing-detainees frequently go through, during their adolescence and in the first years of their adult life. We are aware that usually this stage is characterized by an intense reactivation of the identifying work: the search for new models of reference, de-identifications, acquisition of new identifications. That is to say, the need to differentiate and discriminate oneself from the figures of one's parents or from the people who fulfilled a parental role along the way to the construction of their own identity.

In the case of the children of missing-detainee parents – most were very small during the dictatorship - this stage takes on particular characteristics: to be able to go through the complex processes of adolescence many of them will need to construe, up to where it is possible, the figures of their missing parents. But in many cases the characteristics of these parents are unknown, such as personality traits, ways of thinking, attitudes, and feelings. For them, an intense process emerges in the search to know more about their parents. Among the aspects they are most concerned about are the interest in knowing what they were doing, what they were like, how do they themselves resemble them, how do their friends and companion-activists remember them, what place did they occupy in the lives of their parents and how did their parents take care of them.

Several films have tried to depict these concerns in different ways. One of them *Historias Cotidianas (Everyday Stories)* (2000, Andrés Habegger), illustrates this period in a very clear and moving manner. In a testimonial way, six young adults narrate fragments of their own stories confronting the disappearance of their parents: the very few personal memories that they have, the fantasies encouraged since they were young with respect to what happened and the illusions of the return are eloquently expressed in this film. On the road to the discovery of their progenitors, during which the possible re-encounter is produced since the real and desired one is not

possible the young adults find letters, photos, and visit houses where their parents had lived (sometimes they had even lived there when very young). They look for similarities, come across anecdotes, try to understand their parents: they go discovering, and during this process they re-write part of their own identity²¹.

Historias Cotidianas, like some other movies on these themes, is directed by the son of missing-detainee parents. And although the story revolves around what happened to each one of the protagonists, that is to say, it is not an autobiographical account; undoubtedly the choice of subject and the mode in which it is depicted, make the spectator think that the making of this film also constitutes a personal mode of the director to elaborate this problem, while at the same time it represents an important contribution to the social processing of this subject.

And in spite of the fact that *Historias Cotidianas* did not form part of the commercial circuit that reaches a mass audience, videos and DVD's have multiplied the possibility of access to it. In this sense, from our institution – EATIP we have considered this film to be an important contribution in thinking about this stage in the life of the second generation of those affected, so that it constitutes an important instrument of transmission, and a possibility of debate in activities of academic formation.

Other films, some of which have also been directed by children of missing-detainee parents, reflect this necessity of the construction of the figure of the missing parents. In some of these films we are spectators of visions affected by some degree of idealization of the parental images; while other positions, for example that depicted in the film *Los Rubios (The Blonde Guys)* (2003, Albertina Carri), express a more questioning perspective as well as criticism of their parents; for example in reference to the conception of the paternal and maternal roles within political activism, which gives way to the possibility of thinking and debating about these issues.

Within our Team we have debated and thought that one of the factors to take into consideration is the difference in the mode of comprehending maternity and paternity from the perspective of the activists living in the 70s: in that historic time. What was collective affected daily practice, with an explicit commitment on the part of the companions of the organizations, of taking care of and bringing up the children whose parents were detained, missing-detainees, or were in a situation of high risk.

21 These observations have been extensively developed by D. Kordon and L. Edelman in *Por-venires de la memoria*.

From the current perspective of post-modernity, where for the great social sectors what is individual has turned into the axis around which life is organized, the concepts of solidarity and community or collective participation have frequently been left in the past, and so it becomes difficult to understand; or even, perhaps, the concept of the paternal role of the political activists of those times might even be valued as something negative.

These considerations only try to contribute some element of debate to the subject depicted in the film *Los Rubios*, directed and acted by the daughter of missing-detainee parents. It constitutes an exponent not only of what we have already referred to in reference to the necessity of the construction of the aspects of one's own identity, but also puts into evidence the frequent intertwining of the professional choices of the children and their own story. In this case, the film-maker chose for her first film an autobiographical theme, related to the political repression of the dictatorship; and from a place of convergence between what is personal and what is public-institutional, she manages to get the support of the National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts (INCAA - Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales) for her project, which, in turn, allows a wider audience to see this film.

Multi and Transgenerational Affectation

It is worthwhile to point out the importance of cinematographic production so that these subjects can go installing themselves each time more within society, so as to contribute to a deeper debate and to be able to re-write that official story that the dictatorship tried to impose, and to construct a historic memory which, from the point of view of the counter-hegemonic practice, tells the real story of what happened during that period as well as in its aftermath. Historic memory is not a univocal or finished entity, it is rather a process in permanent construction in which not only the events that go occurring in society in each period are present but also the effects which the past has left in the social body, which sometimes are reactivated by current experiences.

This is precisely the subject shown in the film *Cordero de Dios (Lamb of God)* (2008, Lucía Cedrón), where from the *express kidnappings* (modality frequently used as from the crisis of the year 2001 by small criminal groups, some of which had members of the security forces who had either retired or were in active duty), the plot develops through three generations:

a veterinarian grandfather linked to the Armed Forces of the dictatorship (the kidnapped victim), a daughter who was a former missing-detainee and later went into exile (whose husband had been delivered to the authorities by her father during the dictatorship to be able to negotiate for her life), and a granddaughter who is absolutely oblivious to what happened to her parents and to her grandfather's participation in the whole affair, but who has an excellent relationship with him.

From a very precise insight, the film discovers the marks left in each one of the protagonists due to the lived story, as well as the profound effects of the relationships left by the traumatic experiences. It also shows how the lie-ridden past, the complicity with the dictatorial power and impunity inevitably all come back, and affect the lives of the following generations.

Final Considerations

These pages, sustained by the constant debates that we have carried out in our Team around the subject of psychosocial trauma, have tried to give an important view on the valuable social role that has been depicted in cinematographic productions with respect to the subject of human rights violations from the dictatorship up to the present. As a cultural production, film-making gathers the experiences of all the community so as to re-work them, process them and give them back by means of varied expressive resources.

The affectionate mobilization that commits all our senses, the intellectual questioning that arises and the capacity to present what is traumatic in the form of an artistic manifestation, make collective closeness to these subjects possible, thus constituting an excellent tool of communication and psychosocial processing.

And finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those people, who for more than 30 years and from a place of profound commitment with social struggles, rescue memory and go in search of justice, transforming the silence into words and the darkness into images, so that as a society, we can become acquainted with our recent history – reflect on it and debate about it – advancing in the individual and collective elaboration of the shared traumatic past with a view to the possibility of constructing a future filled with justice and equality.

List of films about the dictatorship and its psychosocial consequences
(1976-2008)

1. Las tres A son las tres armas: 1977, Cine de Base
2. La isla: 1978-79, Alejandro Doria
3. El poder de las tinieblas: 1979, Mario Sábato
4. Los miedos: 1980, Alejandro Doria
5. Tiempo de revancha: 1981, Adolfo Aristarain
6. Fueye: 1982, Tristán Bauer
7. Plata dulce: 1982, Fernando Ayala
8. Últimos días de la víctima: 1982, Adolfo Aristarain
9. Los enemigos: 1983, Eduardo Calcagno
10. La República perdida: 1983, Miguel Pérez
11. El poder de la censura: 1983, Emilio Vieyra
12. Malvinas, historia de traiciones: 1983, Jorge Denti
13. El arreglo: 1983, Fernando Ayala
14. No habrá más penas ni olvido: 1983, Héctor Olivera
15. El señor Galíndez: 1983-84, Rodolfo Kuhn
16. La historia oficial: 1984, Luis Puenzo
17. Cuarteles de invierno: 1984, Lautaro Murúa
18. Pasajeros de una pesadilla: 1984, Fernando Ayala
19. Darse cuenta: 1984, Alejandro Doria
20. En retirada: 1984, Juan Carlos Desanzo
21. Los chicos de la guerra: 1984, Bebe Kamin
22. Madres de Plaza de Mayo: 1984-85, Susana Muñoz y Lourdes Portillo, Argentina-Estados Unidos
23. El huésped: 1985, Cristina Gómez Moragas, México
24. Tango. El exilio de Gardel: 1985, Fernando Solanas, Francia-Argentina
25. Malayunta: 1985, José Santiso
26. La búsqueda: 1985, Juan Carlos Desanzo
27. Hay unos tipos abajo: 1985, Emilio Alfaro y Rafael Filipelli
28. Bajo tierra: 1985, Eduardo Ruderman y Rodrigo Furth
29. La nariz: 1985, Alberto Giudici
30. Contar hasta diez: 1985, Oscar Barney
31. Por una tierra nuestra: 1985, Marcelo Céspedes
32. La República perdida II: 1985, Miguel Pérez

33. Sentimientos. Mirta, de Liniers a Estambul: 1985-87, Jorge Coscia y Guillermo Saura
34. Tiempo de conciencia: 1986, Héctor Fontanellas
35. Memoria y homenaje a la noche del 16 de septiembre de 1976: 1986, Carlos Vallina
36. La Noche de los Lápices: 1986, Héctor Olivera
37. Ford Falcon, buen estado: 1986, José González Asturias
38. No al punto final: 1986, Jorge Denti
39. Made in Argentina: 1986-87, Juan José Jusid
40. Punto Final: 1987, Pablo Nisenson
41. La sagrada familia: 1987, Pablo César
42. Juan como si nada hubiera sucedido: 1987, Carlos Echeverría
43. Sofía: 1987, Alejandro Doria
44. En el nombre del hijo: 1987, Jorge Polaco
45. Bajo otro sol: 1987, Francisco D'Intino
46. El ausente: 1987, Rafael Filipelli
47. Habeas corpus: 1987, Jorge Acha
48. Los dueños del silencio: 1987, Carlos Lemos, Argentina-Suecia
49. A los compañeros la libertad: 1987, Marcelo Céspedes y Carmen Guarini
50. Lo que vendrá: 1987-88, Gustavo Mosquera
51. Gracias por los servicios: 1987-88, Roberto Maiocco
52. Bajo otro sol: 1987-88, Francisco D'Intino
53. La deuda interna: 1987-88, Miguel Pereira, Argentina-Gran Bretaña
54. Sur: 1987-88, Fernando Solanas, Argentina-Francia
55. La amiga: 1988, Jeannine Meerapfel, Argentina-Alemania
56. País cerrado, teatro abierto: 1989, Arturo Balassa
57. El beso del olvido: 1991, Eduardo Mignogna
58. Un lugar en el mundo: 1991-92, Adolfo Aristarain
59. Los chicos del Belgrano: 1992, Miguel Pereira, Gran Bretaña
60. La voz de los pañuelos: 1992, Marcelo Céspedes y Carmen Guarini
61. Un muro de silencio: 1992, Lita Stantic, Argentina-México-Gran Bretaña
62. El lado oscuro: 1992, Gonzalo Suárez
63. Hundan al Belgrano: 1993, Federico Urioste, Argentina-Gran Bretaña
64. Una sombra ya pronto serás: 1994, Héctor Olivera
65. El censor: 1995, Eduardo Calcagno
66. Cazadores de utopías: 1996, David Blaustein
67. Buenos Aires viceversa: 1996, Alejandro Agresti
68. Prohibido: 1996, Andrés Di Tella

69. 1977, casa tomada: 1997, María Pilotti
70. Por esos ojos, la historia de Mariana: 1997, Gonzalo Arijón y Virginia Martínez, Francia
71. Martín (Hache): 1997, Adolfo Aristarain, Argentina-España
72. Montoneros, una historia (SBP): 1998, Andrés Di Tella
73. Garage Olimpo: 1999, Marco Bechis, Argentina-Francia-Italia
74. H.G.O: 1998, Víctor Bailo y Daniel Stefanello
75. Botín de guerra: 1999, David Blaustein
76. Yo, sor Alice: 1999, Alberto Marquardt
77. Padre Mugica: 1999, Gabriel Mariotto y Gustavo E. Gordillo
78. Historias cotidianas: 2000, Andrés Habegger
79. Fuckland: 2000, José Luis Márques
80. Operación Walsh: 2000, Gustavo Gordillo
81. Papá Iván: 2000, María Inés Rocqué
82. Los Pasos Perdidos: 2001, Manane Rodríguez
83. Kamchatka: 2002, Marcelo Piñeyro
84. En ausencias: 2002, Lucía Cedrón
85. Hijos: el alma en dos: 2002, Carmen Guarini y Marcelo Céspedes
86. Los malditos caminos: 2002, Luis Barone
87. Hijos/Figli: 2002, Marco Bechis
88. Che vocachai: 2002, Laura Bondarevsky
89. Los rubios: 2003, Albertina Carri
90. Errepe: 2003, Gabriel Corvo, Gustavo de Jesús
91. Sol de noche: 2003, Pablo Milstein y Norberto Ludín
92. Flores de septiembre: 2003, Pablo Osores, Roberto Testa y Nicolás Wainszelbaum
93. Trelew: 2004, Mariana Arruti
94. Nietos: 2004, Benjamín Ávila
95. Hermanas: 2004, Julia Solomonoff
96. Cautiva: 2004, Gastón Biraben
97. Identidad perdida: 2005, Nicolás Gil Lavedra
98. Crónica de una fuga: 2006, Adrián Caetano
99. Un claro día de justicia: 2006, Ana Caccopardo e Ingrid Jascheck
100. Victoria: 2007, Adrián Jaime
101. Madres: 2007, Eduardo Walger
102. M: 2007, Nicolás Prividera
103. Cordero de Dios: 2008, Lucía Cedrón
104. ESMA, Memorias de la resistencia: 2010, Claudio Remedi

For a more complete list, please consult: Millán, F. (2001) *La Memoria Agitada. Cine y Represión en Chile y Argentina*. Spain: edited by the Fundación de Cine Iberoamericano de Huelva-<http://www.cinenacional.com/listados/estrenos.php?lang=&anyo =1976>

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About what is ominous in the social scene

Daniel Kersner

This written work will deal with some examples of what is ominous or sinister in the Argentine social scene. To state what is ominous is to refer back to, as a forced starting point, Freud's famous work (1919). What is ominous or sinister belongs to the order of what is terrifying, provokes anguish and horror. The German word *unheimlich* designates that variety of what is terrifying that goes back to what is familiar, to what all of a sudden is revealed to us as something unknown. Its effect produces terror, fear, confusion and paralysis.

Etymologically and philologically, what is ominous is associated to what is suspicious, what is alien and strange, with what is uncomfortable and produces unease, with what is horrendous and repulsive, with what is lugubrious, with what is demoniac, and finally, with what is a bad omen or a bad sign. The term *bird of ill omen* refers to the appearance of a bird on one's left side the sinister side and this meant that something bad was going to happen in the future.

Jentsch (quoted in Freud, 1919) highlights intellectual uncertainty from what is ominous, what is ominous is something within which one cannot orient oneself, it supposes a loss of references. This loss comes about, especially affecting the most primary references: what is animated and what is unanimated, life and death, the before and the after, the oneness and the multiple. Within the theme of the oneness and the multiple, we can include the problems of doubleness, repetitions and circularity. Circularity can be thematic, spatial or temporal. Circularity presupposes repetition, loss of references and enclosure. It is present in numerous cultural productions, from the traditional story of *La Buena Pipa* (a children's story which repeats itself indefinitely) to *Las Ruinas Circulares* of Borges (1944). What is ominous is also associated to omnipotence of thought, which covers animist thinking and superstition.

Freud situates the complex of castration as the last consequence of what is ominous: "*On a certain hot afternoon while I was walking along the*

empty streets, that were unknown to me, in a small Italian city, I ended up in a sector whose character I could not doubt for too long. I could only see women with a lot of make-up who looked out of the windows of their small houses, and I hurried on so as to leave behind the narrow alley by turning at the first corner. But after wandering about without a definite route for a while, I suddenly found myself again in the same street where I was starting to call attention, and my hurried exit only resulted in again coming for a third time to the same place after walking around for a bit. It was then that a feeling took hold of me, a feeling that I can only qualify as ominous, and I felt happy when, renouncing to ulterior trips of discovery, I again found the piazza that a short time before I had abandoned”. Freud tells of this personal experience to illustrate the ominous effect of repetition. However, his example can also be analyzed in relation to his repressed sexual desires and the anguish of castration. Let us re-examine this: Freud cannot doubt the character of those women – who are obviously prostitutes – yet he cannot name it either. The superego interdiction is so strong – without doubt it is proportional to the unconscious desire – that he cannot even name the word, to a fetishized and taboo time, as children do with swear words. The *narrow alley* which he hurriedly leaves seems to be a vagina, and the same street where he begins to *call attention* is the object which arouses his own attention. The *hot afternoon* which frames the experience, perhaps alludes to his own excitement faced with the novelty of his incursion. The desire which the prostitutes awaken in him, expensively repressed, seem to re-edit childhood sexual investigations. It is he, himself, who says that he will renounce to *ulterior trips of discovery*, that is to say, of sexual inquiries. Finally, the prostitutes seem to remind him of his mother, as an object that is always available and unconditional – such as idealized motherly love – and at the same time, forbidden. Repression is an unspeakable desire and the anguish of castration has been imposed. The example also manifests the loss of references, repetition and the lived experience of enclosure.

With different inquiries into the culture and its varied considerations, it is Freud himself who opens up a broad panorama for the development of the problems of what is ominous, which does not stop at castration or child sexuality. A patient of his referred to *omnipotence of thinking* to those phenomena such as desiring someone’s death and then it is fulfilled; and the *evil eye*, to a situation in which the possession of something *valuable and fragile* makes one fear the envy of the others as a projection of one’s

own envious feelings – and also the *Gettatore* by Schaeffer. From our own legacy we can cite the theatrical *Jettatore!* by Gregorio de Laferrere²² and *Fúlmine*, a comic character by Divito²³. Both were made into movies by Bayón Herrera²⁴. At the biblical level, Jonas was suspected of being a *jettatore* or *jinx*. His denial to follow divine order to preach to Ninive brought about a terrible storm; and in order to solve this predicament, the ship's crew decides to throw him overboard, because he is a *jinx*. It is after all this that the known story of his being inside the whale comes about.

During Carlos Menem's government long lists of dramatic or tragic situations circulated, which, in some manner, were associated to the former president²⁵. Presently, the sole mentioning of his name continues to provoke in many people, in a ritualistic manner which is almost reflexive, all sorts of countermeasures to annul the supposed noxious power. All of this being stated without entering into political considerations about his government, or perhaps this collective production of a mythical nature is a form of expression of these considerations. From the same period we can mention the list of homicides that occurred in relation to the legal case of Carlos Menem Jr.'s death. Twelve people linked to the case died, among them a sheriff, an agent from the SIDE²⁶, a medical doctor, the brother of one of the experts and the secretary of a brigadier. Six of the twelve victims were killed by bullets, one was stabbed, another was run over by a truck and four died in suspicious circumstances. Not less considerable are the number of homicides and suspicious suicides of people linked, either

22 Gregorio de Laferrere (1867-1913) was a writer and a politician. Abel Stewart Escalada was his pen name as a journalist. He founded Labardén, a conservatory of dramatic art, and wrote the comedy *Jettatore!* in 1905.

23 José Antonio Guillermo Divito (1914-1969) was an illustrator, humorist and editor. He was the founder and director of *Rico Tipo*, a famous magazine. His character, *Fúlmine*, was feared because he was a magnet to misfortune and bad luck.

24 Luis José Bayón Herrera (1889-1956). He was born in Vizcaya, Spain. He was a director and scriptwriter. He made more than 30 films, among them *Jettatore!* (1938), with Tito Lusiardo and Enrique Serrano; and *Fúlmine* (1949), with Pepe Arias and Pierina Dealessi.

25 These included the sports accident in which Daniel Scioli lost an arm, the accident of the plane which he used for campaigning, to the many people he greeted or visited and who died shortly afterwards. This list is, of course, constructed by making a selective cut in reality, once the identity of *jettatore* or *jinx* has been attributed. The selection of data is always self-confirming.

26 State Information Service. (Servicio de Información del Estado).

as participants or investigators, to business deals in those years. What is ominous comes forth in these examples in the format of a mafia-type modality – and this includes, besides homicide itself, a threatening message for third parties. This third party can be a person, an institution or society. Paradigmatic to this modality was Marcelo Cattaneo's death – linked to the IBM-Banco Nación scandal – who appeared hanging from an antenna near Ciudad Universitaria, with a newspaper clipping on the case from the daily *La Nacion*, stuffed into his mouth²⁷.

What is ominous can also present itself in a discourse. By acting on the most primary references, it can erase the boundaries between fiction and reality, putting into question the examination of reality. Former President Fernando de la Rúa, right in the middle of his government crisis, while being interviewed by Susana Giménez, explained that the economic collapse of his mandate was because of the scarcity of hake. He would then go on to declare the state of siege and would order the repression of December 19 and 20, 2001, which as a result, left more than 30 people dead in all the country. On his part, former President Eduardo Duhalde, upon taking office – in an extremely difficult moment –, declared “*We are condemned to success*”. Months later he affirmed that anyone who had deposited dollars would withdraw dollars. A few days after this, he confessed: “*Let it be God's will*”. The current Cabinet Chief, former Minister of Justice and Human Rights and former Minister of the Interior, the same person who on some occasions referred to the *sinister left* (we don't know if it was said as redundant or in reference to what is ominous), when faced with the disappearance of Julio López, and ignoring the denouncement made by the Association of Former Missing-Detainees (*Asociación de Ex Detenidos Desaparecidos*), suggested that López was probably hiding in the house of some relative.

The disappearance of Julio López and the poisoning of the genocidaire Febres are perhaps two episodes in which what is sinister comes forth with greater force in the current social scene. Suddenly, past and present are confused, judicial process and disappearance are overlaid. Nothing is the same anymore: anonymity and threats to witnesses and judges take on a lugubrious relevance, the central concern becomes the security of the witnesses rather than the verdict. Finally, like in the *Maderos de San Juan**, a perverse logic is installed: the more basic the claim, the more brutal the

27 “Los muertos de Carlos Menem”, see:
<http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2005/07/307534.php>

response. The assassination of Professor Fuentealba, by other people responsible of this terrible event, responds to the same logic.

Jentsch points out (quoted in Freud, 1919) that to produce ominous effects in literary stories, it is convenient to leave the reader in uncertainty and, that that uncertainty must not occupy the centre of his attention, because that would force him to question things and could allow him to solve the problem. In a converging manner, we think that these situations are present as a *background* in daily life. Society is present but impotent to the unpunishable repetition of crime, now with a higher stake: just as the repressors who carry out their work and are duly silent are protected - the case with the murderers of Trelew, protected and concealed by the Navy during 36 years, is a perfect example -, the repressors who put the pact of silence and blood in danger are also killed.

As what is sinister - and impunity presents at least one of its facets associated to what is sinister - has influenced the lives of our society from the dictatorship up to the present, because it was present in the construction of subjectivity, it influenced relationships as well as the system of social values and ideals; it has been and still is a subject of investigation and debate. And it is undeniable that life in our country has been molded by these phenomena at the same time that they became naturalized. We are still suffering the erasing of a whole generation, the disappearance of not only thousands of people but also of a political project, in the broad sense. The reconstruction and transmission of all this to the new generations, with the necessary recycling, but also with the necessary return to the forbidden sources, is inexorably associated to the triad *memory, truth and justice*.

* Translator's Note = a type of nursery rhyme in which the people claim for food, are given bones to eat and in the end are killed.

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Social trauma and silence

Daniel Kersner

*“Listening to silence,
words can never be lost”.*

Silence and Depositing

A frequent phenomenon that we observe in our clinical work concerning traumatic situations of social origin is the presence of silence. Thus, we see that certain people are never asked or talked to about the traumatic situation – and/or of the loss undergone – so as to, precisely, “not make them suffer”. On some occasions we have seen a whole family, who has undergone an important loss, unable to talk to each other about what happened. Metaphorically speaking, each member of the family is *crying in his/her own room*. And although they are affected by a common cause, a common pain, they suffer it individually and in an isolated manner. We have heard as an excuse that this type of behavior is to avoid the suffering of a third party. In some families this is deposited in one member in particular, while in other families every member has chosen another one to *take care of*. During a seminar on the consequences of the Spanish Civil War, at a roundtable in which five relatives talked about their loved ones killed in battle, all of them manifested that they were not able to speak to at least one family member about the death of this loved relative. This family member was a particular one, whom they thought was especially fragile in relation to this subject – either due to the characteristics of the person, the type of relationship they had had with the dead person or the closeness to the person who had died (usually given by the degree of kinship). The different testimonies were from people who had a high degree of intellectual and political comprehension of the events, as well as a considerable personal elaboration of the facts. Some of them had even undergone psychological treatment. We think that the conscious intention of trying not to cause

suffering to the relative also serves as a rational argument to a mechanism of depositing and immobilization of traumatic and extremely anguishing elements which would, undoubtedly, make the *caring* subject suffer. In an analogous manner to what Bleger (1976) proposed in relation to the function of the constant elements of the framework – to whom the psychotic aspects of personality would be deposited – , we believe that in not speaking to the person chosen as the deposittee of pain; a protective and defensive function towards the others, the caretakers, is being fulfilled. The deposittee, therefore, becomes a sort of *container* of the most painful elements: it is he who will suffer, it is he who will feel bad whenever the subject is brought up, it will be he, definitely, who should be protected from the psychic pain that comes about when talking about or remembering painful situations. The best way of not speaking to the deposittee of these subjects, so that the elements deposited and fixed there are not mobilized, will be to not talk about the subject or anything related to it – and so the link tends to become superficial and lesser. The best way in which not to even mention the subject is to avoid speaking to the deposittee, a situation which will favour his isolation and, in turn, reinforce his position of depositing. You don't even ask the deposittee about his silence, on the contrary, you reinforce it with more silence. His lack of speech is reinforced with the lack of speech around him, since talking would shift him from his role. The deposittee, in a great measure, suffers for the others – those who develop, under the guise of an altruistic discourse and without knowing it, a strategy for this purpose: a set of maneuvers that tend to reinforce the silence of the deposittee. In general, these are mechanisms of avoidance and isolation. To the silence of the deposittee, we cast upon him a silence from the exterior, which usually starts in those who are closest to him. In our clinical practice we have repeatedly observed, both in the cases of the missing-detainees as in the young adults murdered in *trigger-happy cases* (Kersner, Kordon and Edelman, 1995), how the relatives distance themselves from the family who is directly affected. And although we believe that this is because of a number of factors, we also think that the described mechanism belongs to this situation. Strictly speaking, this relationship mechanism is at the service of the defence of the ego of the supposed caretakers, due to the possibility of an irruption of an increasing anguish that threatens to overwhelm them. Here, the silence imposed on the deposittee is rooted in the identification of the pain of this person and at the same time is favoured by that same identification, it facilitates the projection, depositing and immobilizing of the threatening ele-

ments of the ego. If the depositee suffers for all the others, at the same time he is freeing them from psychic work and from spending energy that could be applied to other objectives. He is the one who does the *heavy work*, in the sense of keeping and containing the elements that provoke that pain. Every silence, every word that is not spoken, every censored feeling, every avoided reference, every intentional change of subject will reinforce this mechanics with the secret objective of preserving the caretakers.

External silence

During the 50's and the 60's the cases of several Japanese soldiers of the Second World War who had been found in the jungle came to be known. They had been hiding there waiting for an enemy attack: they believed that the war was still going on. These soldiers had been fixed to the traumatic situation of the war. The war, as a paradigmatic expression of trauma, does not have a past or a future – it occurs in a time which is always the present, non-changing, non-elapsing, a perpetual present that involves the totality of the person. All his life is conditioned and subjected to this detained temporality. We find the paradigm of what is traumatic in these soldiers: a time which is always a present, a total conditioning of the subject, a radical isolation, a lack of sense or a past sense that is no longer valid and an extreme impoverishment of life. In these cases, the strengthening of what is traumatic – traumatic and paranoid – was a determining factor brought about by the external silence. The lack of words coming from the exterior reinforced in the soldiers the belief of the continuity of the war, it was a silence that was added to the silence of the *horrors without name* (without words) to which Nachin (1997) refers to, and which is characteristic to what is traumatic. Social isolation left the subjects at the mercy of what is traumatic, always updated, and of their own terrifying fantasies. The lack of another person operated as the lack of a limit when confronted with their own fantasies and also – and above all – it operated as a deficit in the principle of reality. There was no sign – no word – coming from another person that indicated that the war had ended; moreover, silence could have been thought of as an unmistakable expression of the continuity of the conflict. Silences – silence as a lack of information – tend to fill up with the worst fantasies. On the other hand, the passing of time did not indicate anything; it did not matter if one day had passed or one hundred, in *the perpetual present* the days are all alike as happens in the film “*Groundhog Day*” (Harold Ramis, 1993)

and each day will begin exactly like the first day. Similarly to what Piera Aulagnier (1977) points out in reference to alienation, the passing of time would be evident to an external observer, but not observable to someone living in *the perpetual present*; on the contrary, they would be totally surprised. It wouldn't have been at all easy to make these Japanese soldiers, embedded in the war, understand that time had passed and that the war was over. In other words, that reality was different. The exterior silence validated the lived traumatic experience of the war, and nothing came to limit that continuity uniquely inhabited by their own fantasies.

Silence as a form of political resistance

In the film *Tiempo de Revancha (Time for Revenge)* (Aristarain, 1981), the protagonist manages to get an important compensation by pretending to have become mute due to an accident at work²⁸. So as not to give himself away, he cuts off his tongue and so he becomes really mute. This fact makes his triumph paradoxical, Pirro's victory. The film which is about the disappearance and torture of people during the last military dictatorship and of the large multinational companies that would benefit from all that, also alludes to silence as a form of political resistance. Long before the protagonist mutilated himself to preserve his life, another character puts out a cigarette on his own arm, in unmistakable evidence that he had resisted torture without *saying anything*. Silence is presented as a form of political resistance that limits the omni-mode power of the oppressor: there is no power that will make the *convinced person* talk, even if his integrity or life is at stake. This last limit also represents the power of reason when confronted with force or, in other words, the force of reason when confronted with the (un) reason of force. Not speaking, even at the cost of one's own life, converts the *silent person* into the bearer of an inextricable reason, and in that sense, of an irrefutable truth. The silence of those tortured, dead or alive, is the defeat of the torturer, his bosses, his chiefs, of the dominating class, of the doctrine and the system they all represent. It is a disobedient silence taken to the extreme, it is non-submissive, and preserves whoever sustains it in the middle of the suffering, in his self-esteem and in his social value; ultimately, in his identity. Silence can also be a coherent and efficient

28 Bekerman, S. (2010). Cultural production: contributions from cinematography to the psychosocial processing of collective traumas. In this book.

political action. If the mandate of power is to keep silent, the discrimination of this mandate would be to talk and go through all its equivalents: paintings on the walls, flyers, international denouncements, etc. If the mandate of power is to speak (under whatever kind of threat, or directly under torture), the act of resistance would be silence. As a counterpart to silence as a form of political resistance is silence as a product of self-censure. This is the internalization of censorship, its real triumph. Self-censorship begins being something conscious, an act of volition in appearance, almost always rationalized as an equation between the need to say something and the convenience of remaining silent. Convenience in terms of personal integrity, of life or death.

Basic silences and anxieties

Silence presents a notable correspondence with basic anxieties. Especially evident in group work, we can, therefore, observe silences of a persecutory, depressive and confusing type, as the expression of the corresponding anxieties. We must also refer to reflexive silence which is common to elaborative moments or moments of synthesis, which necessarily require a depressive position in order to favour retrospection. This position is functional and does not construct a depressive moment in pathological terms. A certain semiology arises from silence during group work: in relation to the moment in which it appears (before or after something), to the comments which try to break it or come afterwards, to the corporality that is put at stake and to the underlying situation of fantasy. The base situation which the group is going through must always be taken into account at the moment of analysing the silence: when a member leaves the group, this loss can be expressed by a depressive silence; confusional silence usually appears when there are modifications in the framework. The arrival of a new member can also trigger confusional or paranoid silence. It can present itself as a silence of a schizoid type linked to primitive dissociative mechanisms and even to fantasies of corporal fragmentation. Problems common to the group dynamics (rivalries and alliances, leaderships and scapegoating, envies and jealousies, etc.) are usually the producing events of silences. In this manner, a strong and sustained silence can contain and announce, a struggle for leadership with its conflicts of loyalties and fantasies of group dissolution. The supposed Bionian basics (1948-51) can also be present – and be read – in some silent situations: a group remains in expectant

silence, in a dependent mode of waiting for the *wise* words of the coordinator, of what supposedly this person knows and has not yet expressed. It is a silence of wrinkled brows and hostile looks that can announce an oncoming attack; while a silence that is accompanied by corporal tension and an alert attitude can be harbouring a lived experience of escape.

In the bipersonal mechanism of individual approach, silence has a more unidimensional character. To this one must add, that usually, this is interpreted as resistance to therapeutic work, without distinguishing what characteristics it presents and what processes these characteristics are revealing. We tend to simplify silence in individual therapy massifying it phenomenology and sense it and take it as an obstacle for the emergence of speech and of analytical work, without going deeper into its comprehension.

Silence, hospital: silence is not healthy

Silence and rest are intrinsically associated through sleeping. However not all repose needs silence, nor is all silence, obviously, equivalent to repose or induces it. We have extended this biological relation beyond biology itself. The image of the nurse asking for silence is synonymous of hospital, sick people and/or people in recovery. For psychiatry and psychology, and very especially as from psychoanalysis, speech, words, the possibility of oral expression, are the *via regia* towards recovery. The model of treatment in psychology, in practically all the schools and theories, includes the word as a *princeps* element. In this sense, the model of psychological treatment differs, and even opposes, the hospital model that requests silence. In most cases, in our professional practice silence is not healthy – quite the contrary, it leads to imprints of what is traumatic, of what is repressed or what has not been named. The fantasies of death or what is thanatic, in general, tend to close themselves up after prolonged silences; and in groups, the silent members are usually the deposites of these burdens.

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Insecurity or inequality?

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1 The subject of *insecurity* has been installed in the centre of the national scene: dozens of politicians and journalists propose lowering the age of accountability and to increase the sentences. A candidate proposes to create a map of insecurity, several artists claim for the death penalty, a rabbi proposes changing some of the words of the national Anthem: where it says three times *freedom*, it should repeat *security* three times. All these things show that a new scale of values has been proposed where security would occupy the highest social value, as regards the *sacred shout**. Security understood as the protection of life and property when confronted by an attack, whether real or potential, from those that do not have things (not of others). Bluntly speaking, what they are claiming for is repression since none of the mentioned measures prevents crime. As Berthold Brecht once said: “Nothing is more similar to a fascist than a scared bourgeois”.

2. The feelings of fear and powerlessness present in our society create fertile soil for the germination of these messages. These feelings match multiple insecurities – especially those of a socio-economic nature (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos and Kersner, 2004): the insecurity of obtaining and maintaining work, the insecurity of being able to give your children food and education, the insecurity with respect to a house (suffered by those millions of people who are not owners), the insecurity of those who do not have medical insurance or social security, the insecurity of those who retire, etc. These insecurities, which have increased over the last decades, have produced a massive non-support of the subjects.

3 . The loss of support of social origin produces a loss of a place in the look and in the acknowledgement of the other. The lived experience of feeling one’s own social belonging seriously affected alters subjectivity, it takes away sense since the acknowledgement of the other is necessary for access

* Translator’s note: reference to words sung in the Argentine national anthem

to the social dimension of the subject (Edelman, Kordon and Lagos, 2002). What is felt is *the anguish of not being assigned*: the subject is not recognized or necessary to others. What is lost is *a place in the world*, a place in which to feel a part of, to feel useful and taken care of. There exists, then, a close relationship between material helplessness and psychic helplessness (Edelman, Kordon and Lagos, 2002).

4. Many times the saying *poverty generates delinquency* is debated. In professional debates, renown defenders against this statement postulate that “not all those who are poor are delinquents”, that among the poor “there are also very honest people”. This kind of cynicism distorts and conceals reality: social inequality is what brings about violence. This violence can manifest itself as delinquency, as toughness, brutalization and cruelty, particularly when the causes of this violence cannot find a political translation in those who are suffering it. As long as this inequality is not reverted, more violence and greater social decomposition can be expected – meaning that there will be a loss of values, norms and codes (anomie).

5. On this real substratum, campaigns of psychological induction are mounted and carried out by the mass means of communication, which generally belong to powerful economic groups. Fear is promoted and instrumented until reaching a type of collective paranoia. Something which cannot be bypassed is that the very interests of the media are present in their informative policies: they *construct reality* that later millions of people internalize.

6. If insecurity is constructed in *dominant social representation*, it is transformed into a socio-cultural organizer that subordinates and conditions others. It becomes a supreme social value, and anything and everything authorizes or justifies it. In this manner, a *progressive* congresswoman declared, after the first Blumberg demonstration, that “*it was time to make concessions*”, that is to say, to make the penal code harsher. What was not said was *what* was being conceded, and *to whom* this concession was addressed to. Obviously, the harsher sentences are not for the crimes committed by the powerful (business men, bankers, officials). They are always for the sectors of greater social vulnerability, those that crowd the jails²⁹.

29 The most written poem on the walls of our jails says: “In this damn place/ where sadness reigns/ crime is not punished / only poverty is punished”.

7. If *social inequality* is the cause of delinquency, one would have to do everything possible to avoid associating delinquency with social inequality, since the next step would be to associate social inequality with the *distribution of wealth*, and this is a subject which never must be spoken about. This is all about keeping social violence within the sphere of crime, of marginality, of social abnormality. Of not putting it into words with its material determinants: those that are economic, social, political and cultural. What this is all about: trying not to allow any transcription of that violence into political terms.

8. In this movement of the manipulation of sensitivity and public opinion, what is hidden, among other things is that, in the statistics of violent deaths occurred in the country – according to a study carried out by Eugenio Zaffaroni – the first place is due to *traffic accidents*; the second place to *suicides*; the third place to *homicides* among known people, and only in the fourth place is that of *homicides for other crimes* such as robbery and kidnapping. We have no knowledge that the media, political parties, journalists or people of the arts are organizing campaigns or making statements about these issues which, besides their numerical importance, also present social elements which are worthy of study and very easily modified by public policies. A whole chapter should be written on the concealment of security produced by *trigger-happy cases* (one death every 36 hours according to information of Correpi) and the participation of the police in extortive abductions and in other numerous crimes.

9. If we conceive *common sense* as the product of the internalization of the dominant social discourse articulated with collective fantasies, then one would have to construct a common sense where insecurity remains absolute, in a unique slogan that tends to convoke people together. This internalization makes induced ideas appear spontaneous, natural as if they were one's own ideas. We find ourselves in the middle of the phenomenon of *social alienation*, understood as a set of psychosocial mechanisms by which the discourse of the dominant sectors penetrates vast sectors of the population. This phenomenon occurs without the subject being aware of it. As from that moment, the subject will go through changes in his way of thinking and acting, as well as in his ways of feeling and perceiving. Fundamentally his possibility of thinking, of having a critical and discriminate judgment towards what is prevailing, will be altered. According to Piera

Aulagnier (1977), alienation is a pathology of thinking. This makes the public sectors take up and reproduce this discourse and these behaviours. Paraphrasing Brecht, nothing is more similar to a bourgeois than a worker alienated in the dominating discourse.

10. In the *map of social inequality*, fear operates due to its presence as well as to its absence. If the *other* is accused through a psychologically paranoid discourse which is ideologically discriminating and politically segregationist, he stops being a human being. In *Psychology of the Masses and Analysis of the Ego*, Freud (1921) states that “*in the mental life of the individual, the other counts, with total regularity, as a model, as an object, as a helper and as an enemy...*”³⁰. It is no coincidence that this menu starts off with the other as a model, a place which is valued and idealized; and then ends with the other as an enemy, a place of maximum tension. The place of the enemy is the place where the other is less of a human being³¹, where his otherness is more questioned. Things being thus, the enemy is constructed by difference and denial. Because of the difference, he is turned into a *container* of everything that has a negative value to the subject, within a logic where only what is ideal exists as well as its negative counterpart (Bleichmar, 1991). Because of denial, his otherness is erased and even his condition of being human: he has stopped being a human being and, therefore, the relationship of reciprocity is lost. This loss, and its substitution for the relationship of enemy, supposes a sociology of exclusion and annihilation. The other is passible of being annihilated, etymologically speaking, reduced to nothing. Let us remember the decrees of *annihilation* of subversive action or the speeches of Videla or Saint Jean.

11. The other pole of fear, in this case due to absence, is that of those who are excluded. It is well known that when hope is lost, fear is also lost. In many interviews to marginalized youth, the phrase “*we have nothing to lose*” is repeated constantly. For us, this means that there is no hope, there is no future, there is no possibility of something different, and in consequence, there is, as they say, nothing to lose. The young adults who *have fallen* outside the system, without work, without studies, without even prom-

30 Some translations talk about adversary and others, of enemy.

31 In his Project, Freud refers to *Nebenmensch* as the complex of one's fellow beings, that is to say, as a first object that is similar, who is defined as a fellow man, and has with him a relationship of reciprocity (Kancyper, 2002).

ises from the political power, have also lost their fear: nothing to lose, nothing to fear. They know that sooner rather than later they will be caught by the police or killed by a policeman, like what happened to their older brother, friend or neighbour “*The hatred towards the police is perhaps the strongest bond of identity among the young people who rob. There is no child-thief who does not have someone he knows who has been shot in an encounter with the police in his history of losses and humiliations*”. Together with the loss of hope, one loses the notion of future, so dear and necessary for psychic functioning. They do not have consideration for the others, either. For them, the other is not a human being. The other is just an obstacle between necessity and satisfaction. Cruelty emerges in the vacuum left behind by the absence of acknowledgement and of belonging, the lack of a project and projection. Death, in many cases, comes even before the bullets, as an extreme de-subjectification. Thus everything vital will be de-invested, and in consequence devalued: social relationships and the other, the relationship with oneself and with one’s body: one’s own life.

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Brief explanations of violence

Daniel Kersner

1. According to the dictionary, violence is: 1) an intense, impetuous force; 2) abuse of force; 3) coercion exercised on a person in order to obtain their acquiescence in a legal act; 4) force that is exercised against the law or an act of law; 5) action of raping or carnally abusing; 6) raping of a woman (*Gran Espasa Ilustrado*, 1997)

Etymologically speaking, it comes from the Latin term *violentus*, which possesses the root *vis*, meaning force, power (Corominas, 1997:608).

These definitions associate violence to force, power, law and sexuality.

2. Who defines what violence is? This is a political argument which is also an argument in the discursive field. For the sector of power, it will be anything that attempts, in a manifest way, against it. Thus it will enforce its own definition of violence as well as the profile of the violent person. It is the manner in which those in power hide their own violence: those who are violent, like the barbarians, always, are the others. What is legal, on the other hand, tries to legitimize the violence of power. Freud (1915) affirms that the State has forbidden injustice for the individual, not so much because he would like to abolish it, but because he wanted to monopolize it.

3. *“First we will kill all the subversive people; then we will kill their collaborators; then their followers; then those that remain indifferent; and lastly we will kill the undecided”* (International Herald Tribune, 1977). This quote that belongs to General Saint Jean describes the spirit of the dictatorship without any euphemisms.

4. For Pierre Bourdieu (1999), symbolic violence exists: invisible for its own victims, it is principally exercised by the paths of communication, knowledge and feelings. Violence which transforms history into nature and that installs itself as common sense, giving structure to schemes of perception and inclinations. Symbolic violence is directly exercised on the body,

producing permanent dispositions and unleashing corporal emotions such as shame, humiliation and guilt.

5. For the Redonditos de Ricotta (a pop group), violence is lying.

6. For Freud (1915), violence has two sources: on the one hand, the aggressiveness that arises from the instinct of preservation; and on the other hand, the destructiveness and hostility coming forth from Thanatos. Culture, understood as the sum of the productions and institutions that exist to protect us from nature and to regulate relationships among men, puts a limit on violence through laws, through the external coercion that comes from education and also through the internal influx of Eros, which transforms selfish instincts into social ones and produces community relationships.

7. Violence by omission also exists. It is related to passiveness and misunderstanding. People do not feel involved and justify their abstentionism with rational arguments. Their actions do not define them, rather their lack of action does. Violence linked to individualism and indifference which – as we know – also kills.

8. For Alfredo Yabrán (a powerful businessman), power is impunity.

9. When one remembers the tragic moments of political history, it usually makes us go back to seeing ourselves at that precise moment. It also happens with social events that mark milestones in our lives: to evoke them is to evoke a certain time and, simultaneously, to evoke ourselves in that time. As Piera Aulagnier (1988) points out, the ego is history and historian at the same time. That is how, for instance, we remember what we were doing when Perón died, how we lived the 1978 World Cup or with whom we went to Plaza de Mayo on Holy Week. Our country's history lives inside us and becomes unique in each one of us.

10. What is the opposite of social violence? Persuasion? (I remember when Alfonsín used to say "*I am persuaded*" as well as Perón's words "*better than ordering is persuading*"). Harmony and non-conflict? Non-conflict, an over-valued term by postmodernity, displaces the founding contradiction of all society: the instinctive renouncement that becomes culture; and the cession of power to the community that becomes the law (Freud,

1930). At the same time it hides the true character of social conflict: its organization into classes. In all oppression, the primary fact is economic, affirms Engels (1878). For Freud (1915), the first cultural requirement is justice.

11. Marx and Engels differentiate oppressive violence, linked to the State and at the service of the dominant class, from a liberating violence – *the midwife of history* –, that would make the appearance of a new society possible. Engels (1878), in a debate with Dühring, affirms that in all oppression the primary event is economic. Thus, for slavery to exist, there must exist private property for the means of production, and for violence to exist, someone must be in possession of weapons of war, which besides – he points out – cost a lot of money.

12. *Página/12*, a daily newspaper, published in its edition of Thursday, March 2, on page 12: “*From the days immediately after the robbery of Banco Río it is being affirmed that the group has points of contact with the robbery of the piqueteros of the Banco de Crédito Argentino*”. The Freudian slip is incredible: *piqueteros* should have been *boqueteros* (very similar sounding words: *piquetero* means the people who cut off streets demanding better conditions of life; while *boquetero* means the robbers who steal by making tunnels from a neighbouring building to a bank). The idea of a provocation was discarded as the newspaper is sensitive to these issues, what is this Freudian slip telling us? What matrix of thought is coming forth?

13. What is the golden rule? Whoever has the gold makes the rule.

14. Piera Aulagnier (1988) defines primary violence as that, which in the psychic field, is imposed from the exterior (and) it is a necessary action in benefit of the constitution of the ego. Primary violence allows the subject to count with a number of necessary resources for its formation. In a broad sense, primary violence covers the imposition of language, first education, vaccinations, etc. On its part, secondary violence is the violence exercised not in a benefit, but rather against the ego, whether it is exercised by a subject or the social *diktat*.

15. For Charlie Garcia (a pop singer), if elections were worth something, they would have already forbidden them.

16. For one sector of the population, poor people are disagreeable, bothersome or dangerous. It is a matter of degree which at the very bottom, expresses the same relationship: the other has stopped being a fellow man and has become an enemy. That is when the logic of extermination comes into action. For those that are marginalized or outcast, the other can also stop being a fellow man, as the person is a representative of the society that excludes them. It is nothing, just a *logi* – an obstacle for the satisfaction of necessity. The law of the jungle takes over.

17. Freud (1932) states, “*Man is not an adorable creature and needy of love (...) a good degree of aggressiveness should be added. Your neighbor is not only a collaborator or a sexual object, he is also a motive to satisfy your aggressiveness in him: exploiting his capacity to work, taking advantage sexually of others, taking over the property of others, humiliating and killing them.*” And then he concludes: *Homo hominis lupus*, man is the wolf of man.

18. Between 1892 and 1893, Ernesto de la Cárcova, the first master of Argentine painting, painted his famous work *Without bread and without work*. With this painting he won the Honour Award at the international exhibition in Saint Louis, USA, in 1904. This painting depicts the interior of a very modest house. Seated at an empty table there is a weary woman with her baby, whom she cannot nurse; and an overwrought man with his wrist clenched as if he had just hit the table. The man is looking out of the window. On the horizon he sees the chimneys without smoke of a closed down factory. On the table there is tool that is no longer useful.

19. According to Gerardo Guthman (1996), “*For those in power the problem is the control of violence. For those that resist power the problem is politics. Violence is a confrontational field in which social issues are settled as if they were not a part of what is social*”.

20. Can primary violence at a social level be conceived, as something that would favour social development; and also a secondary violence that would obstruct the first one? Freud (1932) himself, sustained that the innate differences between individuals made some be leaders and others, subjects – and the latter needed the former to exist, although the former needed to be better educated. He said that laws were made by those who domi-

nated and that those who were dominated, logically, would rise up against those that dominated. In the same manner, he affirmed that every war could not be condemned in the same manner: if there were nations willing to annihilate other nations, then these latter nations – he sustained – had to arm themselves with weapons.

21. For Einstein (1932), war is something that exists because of the ambition of power in the governing classes, due to the mercenary and economic eagerness of other groups, among which are the manufacturers of weapons. For Carl von Clausewitz, war is the continuation of politics through other means. For Bush, war is preventive.

22. Gandhi, champion of non-violence, proposed to reject violence without violence. His system of disobedience and passive resistance, applied by great masses of people over long periods of time and with a clear political objective, was successful. However, if the struggle is anticolonial, between cowardice and violence, Mahatma or the Great Soul chose, although it might seem strange, violence: *“I preach to die without killing, but whoever does not have that courage, I hope chooses the art of killing and dying, before running away shamefully.”* (Massuh, 1976).

23. Discovery Channel. Two wolves are fighting over leadership of the pack. The fight is territorial and fierce. However, they do not inflict upon themselves mortal injuries. At the end of the combat, the defeated wolf – showing his defeat – offers his neck to the winner: he could be killed, if the winner chose to do so. Yet the winner rejects the offer and the defeated wolf leaves the pack. The wolf is not the man of the wolf.

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Power and appropriation

Darío Lagos

The situation that was presented concerning the adoptive children of Ernestina Herrera de Noble is an analyzer which allows one to magnify up to which point the crimes of the dictatorship and impunity have consequences that last until the present.

Over many years, in our team, we have analyzed the subject of appropriation, which has also been a subject of debate in our society. These debates have mobilized feelings and have brought about a great interest, since these are issues that are at the centre of the forms of organization of our culture – as is the family.

Within the framework of the social struggle against impunity and the sustained public denouncement concerning the crimes committed, the idea that the restitution of the identity is a right of the missing-detainees, of the families of origin and of the young adults that were not aware of this fact, is gaining social consensus.

Today, the publicity that surrounds the case of the adoptive children of Ernestina H. de Noble, and of which their origin is still unknown, shows how in a legal dispute that has been ongoing for more than eight years, the complex authorship and complicity of the different sectors of power is articulated when dealing with the subject of the robbing of the identity of the children that were abducted with their mothers or who were born in captivity. This constituted a real, non-formalized, and clandestine institution; yet despite all this, it wasn't any less effective in the application of extreme violence and arbitrary decisions on the part of the dictatorship and the sectors of the dominating classes that the dictatorship responded to.

We say that this was a true institutionalization of the abduction of children because they were not excesses, they were not personal decisions of one or another of the repressors but rather responded to a concept and policy that implanted arbitrariness as the norm.

The Clarín Group and their spokespersons use a variety of arguments to victimize themselves, and their desire is to generate in the public opinion

that this is a situation of violence committed against the right to privacy. They use their great economic and media resources to try and transform the subject of the identity of the two young adults into something that is private. They have denounced that the legal action ordered by the judge for obtaining the DNA was tainted with procedures that were abusive towards the intimacy of these people. Their manner of response, in fact, covers up their systematic negative response to collaborate with the legal procedures which are essential for finding the truth. In the long and twisting process of the investigation into the identities of both Marcela and Felipe “Noble Herrera?”, which has been ongoing for a long time, there have been many different moments of irregularities and falsehoods in relation to the manner in which Ernestina de Noble carried out the adoption paperwork. It has been clearly proven that the documents and testimonies were false. However, these true scandals were put aside and the Nobles, who should have given explanations to the judge, managed to squirm out of the responsibility of answering.

The use of the power of the Group to hinder access to the truth, taking into account that the abduction of children was one of the few exceptions that was contemplated by the laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop, can also be observed in this delicate event since it involves the manipulation, negotiation and chain of corruption that the dominating classes make use of.

This is about a situation that is part of a society in which 400 young adults are still deprived of the right to their identity – a right that should be restituted to them. It is the obligation of the State to do everything that is necessary to achieve said restitution, even when some of those young adults do not have the will to take upon themselves that right.

It is also about the need for symbolic reparation in relation to a genocide, which includes the parents of all the abducted children. This reparation would allow, through the truth, to recover the genealogical chain and blood relationships as facts that define social and cultural transmission.

Within the framework of these considerations, which make the appropriation of children an issue which directly affects our social organization, the problem must be approached as an issue of society as a whole and not of a particular family, although in its interior it may be necessary to consider the problems and particularities of each family.

Therefore, it is necessary to remember that:

1. It is the State who dictates that it is obligatory to register the newborn child in a state register in order to document his/her identity. The first social contract of a person, of a legal character, is the imposition of a name and surname. During the dictatorship, this social contract was violently infringed. To such a degree that, as we have pointed out on other occasions³², it affected the functioning of all the institution of adoption. The search for the truth includes the recomposition of the family relationship contract.

2. If we consider that the inscription of a child in the Civil Registry is a social event that institutes identity, the fact that Marcela and Felipe were registered under the surname Noble is not something secondary, given that Mr. Noble had died 10 years before that event. From the etymological point of view, patrimony means inheritance of the father. Under this inscription the mark of a *noble* surname would define that transmission, without using euphemisms, of a good name and economic power.

3. It was the State that organized the appropriation of children during the dictatorship. And Clarín was one of the paradigmatic sectors of the dominating classes that supported Videla and Viola. This sector was the one involved in the negotiation of Papel Prensa, a business deal that, despite all the denunciations produced from popular movements, was carefully concealed for years.

4. It is the State who is responsible for reinstating the identity to the appropriated individuals. Even when the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo and other Human Rights organizations had taken upon themselves to go in search of these appropriated children, and the former missing-detainees carry the burden of the difficult task of the denouncement and identification of the repressors who are being tried; the opening of the archives of the dictatorship, the modification of the structure of the trials as well as all the mechanisms that assure to do away with the concealment and impunity of the crimes of the genocidaires require the implementation of a true State policy to deal with the solution.

5. It is the State which has to determine how to carry out the procedures, the genetic studies and avoid that this decision fall upon those that are affected.

³² This subject has been developed by Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman in the book "*Por-venires de la memoria*", which is a product of the research they carried out on the children of the missing-detainees for the 2004 Guggenheim grant.

6. The denial to accept the legal norms that designate the responsibility of the State in relation to the search for the truth about the origin of the children who were born during the dictatorship implies a self-attribution of power on the part of the Noble family. The use of power of the Clarín group is such, as are their attempts to manipulate and create public opinion, that the question which arises is: Wouldn't they have to explain why they are hindering a procedure which, in this case, would imply if their origin is confirmed to be that of children of missing-detainees not the restitution to live with their family of origin but to gain the restitution of their identity? Why not accept all this with truth?

7. Once again it becomes clear that the discourse of the dictatorship has been taken up under new forms. The real trauma has been of a double dispossession (the children and their families of origin) and the murder of their parents. However, the alienating discourse tries to give a traumatic character to the discovery of the truth. The recuperation of one's identity undoubtedly produces a crisis that requires a psychic and intersubjective work of elaboration. That is to say, it is about the elaboration of the trauma and its consequences rather than a retraumatization.

In other works we have developed the issue of alienation in a detailed manner, and it even includes those abducted children who have refused to go in search of the truth. The subject imposes itself: today Marcela and Felipe take up again the alienating discourse. And in their case, as they are part of the sectors of power – without doubt and in an inseparable manner, interests and alienation intermingle. To put it more concretely, Marcela is already on the Board of Directors of the businesses of the group.

We can say, that even in this case, as Victoria Donda affirms from her own experience, that the recuperation of one's identity is a true act of emancipation.

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Subjectivity and psychism

Some considerations on a current debate

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

The debates which have arisen in the last years concerning the concepts of subjectivity and psychism are inscribed within an important questioning in the relation to subjects conceived as *universal truths* of psychoanalysis.

We subscribe to the idea that it is essential to revolutionize this field rescuing, at the same time, central discoveries contributed by Freud and psychoanalytical theory. These debates are linked to social changes that influence our clinical practice, and that upon re-thinking our bases and tools, the problems of our filiation as therapists is also put into discussion, with the consequent non-sustainment. What does it mean to be a psychoanalyst? What does it mean to be a psychiatrist? These questions influence all the scenarios of the *psi field*.

In moments of transformation, of conceptual crisis, overlappings and confusions are inevitable. The fecundity of creation, of openings, is imposed on the coherence and rigour that all instituted theories demand.

A form of mechanical response to these uncertainties is a marked tendency in the direct application of philosophical and sociological currents on the interpretation of the phenomena and the theoretical constructions of our disciplines, which tend to erase their specificity.

Within this framework, we would like to give our ideas a structure, conscious of the fact that this field remains open and states the necessity of putting new queries to work.

1. The concept of *subjectivity* is polysemic. We understand subjectivity to be the different ways of feeling, thinking, giving significations and sense to the world. It is something simultaneously a part of the individual subject and of the group subject, although there is no linear correspondence between the two aspects.

Each historic period promotes specific models and contents. The production of subjectivity, therefore, is the manner in which societies and cul-

tures determine the forms in which subjects are constituted that are plausible of being integrated into systems which give them a place, thus guaranteeing them a belonging. This has a historic-social character.

The concept of family or of a couple is not universal. It corresponds to each historic period that defines the character of these institutions. The prescriptions and proscriptions of sexuality, either; they are given by what we denominate subjectivity of the time or epoch. Subjectivity of epoch is the product of the way in which each society articulates the material conditions of existence, social relationships, collective practices, and hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses.

The collective forms of subjectivity are structuring in relation to individual subjectivity. However, the latter has its own specificity, it is not a mere reflection of the former. In this sense, there is, within individual subjectivity, as Kaës (1989) points out, “*an arrangement*” of singular psychic reality for every subject.

Silvia Bleichmar (2000) defines it as the place where all the social statements with respect to the ego are articulated.

The concept that the social context is metaphorically a text of subjectivity has ample consensus, as the subject is, by definition, a social being that is constituted as such in the interior of an intersubjective relationship and in social experience. When we refer to context, it is on the basis of including not only discourses and social representations but also the material conditions of existence. Every subject comes into a material world and an ideological system, that is to say, to dominant social statements. Technological advances are inscribed within this material world and, in turn, contribute to generating certain productions of subjectivity.

It is worth pointing out that the social discourses and representations are not homogenous, given that there are formulations produced from those in power and from the instituted order as well as others, of a counter-hegemonic nature, construed within the framework of different social practices.

When we refer to the collective aspect of subjectivity, we are not considering that there is a feeling or a thinking that is not incarnate in subjects. It is not sufficient to consider the different social discourses or ideologies so as to justify subjectivity. It implies considering that the members of a group share ways of thinking and feeling.

For example, in 2001 in Argentina, the expression “*let them all leave*” was accompanied by a feeling of repudiation and of expectation which operated as a group or social unifier. When referring to a “climate of tension”,

it is alluding to the feeling of collective frustration and irritation. Clearly letting it be known that this is not about a supra individual feeling, organized beyond the subjects, who are the ones that feel and think. Yet its collective character is given because the members of this group suppose that they share these types of thoughts and feelings. It is then that we are in the order of what is transsubjective.

The subject of power has a decisive incidence, since the dominant sectors struggle to construct a type of subject that is needed for their self-reproduction. In other words, the social order has its correlation in the modes of instituted subjectivity. This is at the centre of the mechanisms of social control.

Numerous current forms of social organization which are correlative to the necessities of the capitalist system of the last years have made the institutions stop being the guarantors of belonging and have produced a massive de-sustainment in great sectors of the population, which have led to social fragmentation, the fall of collective ideals, the lack of projects and future perspectives. This has become a concept of *bankruptcy* of the institutions within a broader framework of the *fall of the nation-State* and of the end of the historic era of discipline and alienation.

We do not share this idea of the *fall of the nation-State*. We consider that the international economic crisis and our own Argentine reality demolished the theories concerning the non-existence of national States. The so-called predominance of the market implied a stage of the world imperialist and capitalist system, in a period of huge technological transformations, which still require the adjustment of mechanisms of social control so that *institutionality* cannot be questioned. In this manner, we sustain that the construction of a common sense in accordance with the necessities of domination, the *sensu lato* alienation, is a necessity of the system.

2. *Psychism* is a structure with a certain stability, with sub-instances and functions of diverse degrees of development and complexity which respond to different logics. The topics formulated by Freud respond to a structure. The ideal Ego, the ideal of the Ego, and defence mechanisms, are all formulations of psychism. The activity of fantasy representation and construction are also operations that are part of this structure – they include desires and defences.

Psychism is constituted, upon a biological basis, in the interior of an

asymmetrical relationship of the subject with others, on whom he depends during a prolonged time. This extended dependence is given by extreme human pre-maturity as well as the social character of the subject.

The psychic apparatus requires the function of continence as well as that of breakage for its formation. On the other hand, it is open to different life situations, that is, it does not stay constituted once and forever, as it is susceptible to significant modifications.

The research into narcissistic problems, crises and traumas, that were studied in the last years of the XXth century, and very especially as from the incidence of social commotions and of the consistent requirements of clinical practice, have inaugurated the concept of open psychism.

We consider that psychism is constituted as from work that must be carried out by the subject in relation to the dialectics between lack and excess, between the desire of merging, of completeness, or of recuperating the symbiotic-merging mother-child relationship and the excess of stimuli which he has to metabolize through the activity of representation. The identifying process is influenced by this contradiction. We also recognize a desire of encounter to and recognition of what is new. This process is open throughout one's lifetime.

We understand that the psychic structure is subject to construction, development and complexity. And also to the formation of crypts and to changes of predominance, either circumstantial or lasting, of formations such as the Ideal Ego or the Ideal of the Ego: *"The subject is open to his history, not only in the past but in the present. He is between repetition and creation. It is not an open system because some psychoanalysts have decided to apply the theory of complexity to it. It is open because the encounters, relationships, traumas, disasters, reality, bereavement self-organized the subject and he recreates everything that he receives. Certain noise becomes complexing but not de-organizing information. Psychic stability is reconstructed according to conditions which arise and are dispelled constantly"* (Hornstein, 2003:53).

Silvia Bleichmar (2003), in consonance with Laplanche, sustains that what is traumatic is, at the same time, constitutive and establishing of psychic functioning, and that this functioning becomes more complex and evolves as from the necessity of elaborating internal and external stimulus.

We consider that at any moment in the life of someone, the crises (which constitute ruptures in the lived experiences of continuity of the self and

mobilize instituted structures)³³ and the traumas (which disorganize and can overwhelm previous structures) can generate conditions so that psychic changes of certain stability in different directions can be produced, thus modifying the structure and function³⁴.

Changes in psychism are possible as from critical moments, of de-structuring situations which open the possibility to new inscriptions. In our opinion, it is not about quantitative changes, but of situations of leaping. Quantitative changes, or evolution can enrich contents, yet sustain instituted structures. It is moments of crisis, whether vital crises of normal development (adolescence, old age) or trauma, important losses, rupture of relationships the ones that open up the possibility to the production of psychic modifications.

33 Kaës poetically describes the concept of crisis: “*within the serenity of introspection we pretend to believe that, arising as a whole, it has surprised us. It is one of the characteristics of a crisis to appear like this, unexpectedly and in the massiveness of what is unique. But once the irruption is produced, the crisis begins to become a past history and the memories reappear revealing their causes, origins and even their solutions. Only then do we remember the great fractures that have marked the dreamed and smooth surface of the world, of the causes and history, since we suffer within our conscience varied and multiple scars: traces of successive jolts, which through anesthetic echoes, we have experienced in our bodies, in our affections, in death. Verbose, death manifested in the discourses she herself brings up so as to be presented, she mocks our fears yet continues there, since nothing can stop her. Who can stop her if not what is beyond, a guarantee of what is here? From the lack of being maintained in the here – that is, the here and the now – is where the necessity again arises of being beyond projecting a meta-physical, meta-psychic and meta-social space. The disappearance of the old guarantees of order common to all living systems, of what is human, is the main constitutive element of dysfunctions which characterize the multidimensional crises which we must survive. We do not stop confronting them when we create new guarantees upon their recent remains: on the one hand, recurring to the past – a return to archaic ways – to the regressive forms of protection which evidently constitute new guarantees of immortality: new gods, an upsurge of ideological formations, sectarian totalitarianism, paradoxical idealization of death; and on the other side, and in spite of being trapped in the movement itself of those regressions, recurring to the creative experimentation of new styles in relationships and expression, to the open search of the game of antagonisms, to the chance of disorder, to the invention of new balances. We find ourselves here with that which for a long time religious language has called hope, that is, we find ourselves living despite – and not denying – death*”.

34 If the modifications of structure imply a bi or multi directional movement, it would force us to re-think the concept of regression; upon which, on this occasion we will not detain ourselves. The poetic film on Séraphine de Senlis shows a psychotic breaking down as from the excess of narcissistic stimulus which operates as a trauma.

That which has not been metabolized, which remains as a de-organizing excess, and that can even violate and de-inscribe symbolic archives, what is not transcribed, will persist as a traumatic remainder in the subject and will be responsible for the formation of crypts which can be transgenerationally transmitted.

3. We conceive a relationship as a founding instant of psychism and of the subject, as long as this relationship is constituted within the interior of an intersubjective relationship that will be simultaneously the bearer of the social statements. The relationships institute the forms of existence of the subjects, specific subjectivities; but individual subjectivity is not reduced only to a relationship determination, instead it recognizes the mark of psychism.

In the process of the constitution of the subject, the family group is the first group that gives identity. The parents, or their substitutes, as from what Piera Aulagnier (1977) calls exercise of *primary violence* – structuring and necessary violence for the constitution of psychism –, defines the subject and also what the world he is coming into is like. In this process the depositing of expectations and parental narcissization, with the transmission of the social discourse which gives significations and sense to parental desires. Every subject is different according to the relationship in which he is inserted, and simultaneously, every subject has a mark, a seal of identity, like a fingerprint, which is his own.

Some relationships, as from established alliances, contracts and pacts can influence the production of significant modifications of psychic functioning which allow a change in the predominance of pre-existing psychic structures or that favour the configuration of new others.

With respect to the *relationship between subjectivity and psychism*, it is difficult to delimit pertinence. We sustain that psychism suffers transformations, but that its modification times are substantially different from those of the production of subjectivity³⁵.

In turn, psychic function recognizes the imprint of contents, prohibitions and prescriptions, ideals, norms and customs of the predominant subjectivity. Fantasies, which have a double aspect (structure and content), are

35 It is worth pointing out that although in this work we refer to the differences in the modification times between psychism (considered as open psychism) and subjectivity, we must also re-think the question of the times of the changes of psychism over the history of the human race, in relation to the tasks and necessities that it must solve.

deeply linked, in reference to their content, both to psychism and to the type of subjectivity of each epoch; and in reference to their structure, to the functioning of the psychic apparatus.

Some native peoples, such as the Maya or the Wichis, who continue to live a community life sharing territories and, obviously, a historic epoch, with another group of people strongly influenced by industrial development, do not use the first person singular, they use the first person plural, as an expression of a strong collective identity. This implies a difference in the collective aspect of subjectivity. However, the psychism of the members of both groups do not have differences between themselves.

Once we have marked the difference between subjectivity and psychism, we must point out that there is an intimate relationship between the forms of predominant subjectivity and the type of convoking to the functioning of psychism. In profoundly unstable and not very containing societies, the subjectivity of the epoch facilitates the tendency of the functioning of psychism to lean towards the narcissistic pole. The classic neuroses described by Freud are correlative, not by mere reflection, with the dominant subjectivity of Victorian times. They have little to do with the magnitude and amplitude of the current narcissistic problems, linked to the type of subjectivity promoted by current social statements and by the lack of guarantors of the objective. If at one moment the essential thing was to lift repressions, in the other what predominates is the work to construct psychism.

The conceptual confusion between psychism and subjectivity is not fortuitous. Overlappings and the relationship of interiority between both of them make their borders unclear. Continuity in the analysis of this subject can contribute to the selection of instruments of specific intervention.

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TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION. RESEARCH

Introduction

This section addresses the last research developed in EATIP. For some years, we have been especially interested in the subject of *transgenerational transmission of traumas of social origin*, produced by human rights violations, as well as their influence in the life and subjectivity of those that were affected.

The problems of the children of the missing-detainees was one of the initial aspects of the work of the Team of Psychological Assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. The first reflection groups that were carried out³⁶ – by request of the Mothers – dealt with the subject of the information to give the children about the fate of their abducted parents. The issue of identity was, already at that moment, one of the subjects of informal debate within the Team and with other colleagues. We continue to work on the psychological effects in the children of the missing-detainees as from the clinical aspect, generating guiding ideas that allow us to advance and go deeper into the research of these problems³⁷. In this book we will reproduce two chapters of the research carried out by Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman, a research which enriched our initial ideas and allowed new hypotheses to come forth.

During the years 2006-2008, a group of professionals from EATIP³⁸ developed a new research that, upon the basis of its predecessor, developed some subjects already treated in the first research, but broadening concepts and also incorporating the children of those who went into exile and former

36 These groups were coordinated by Diana Kordon, Lucila Edelman and Darío Lagos.

37 These ideas guided the project of the Guggenheim grant in the year 2004, of Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman, and are developed in their entirety in the book “Por-venires de la memoria”, Buenos Aires. Ediciones Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 2007.

38 The team was integrated by Silvana Bekerman, Luciana Soutric, Yamila Pezet, Viviana Mazur, Cintia Oberti and Mariana Lagos, with the collaboration of Nicolás Pedregal and Pablo Habif.

political prisoners³⁹. Some chapters of this research are also included in this section.

The research tries to shed light upon the diverse subjective expressions of these traumas in the young adults and adults that form part of what we have denominated the *second generation of those affected*.

As from these chapters, one will undoubtedly see what our daily professional work has mostly been about: theoretical-clinical exchanges within the Team, and our subjectivities – from the professional viewpoint concerning mental health – are committed to the struggle of human rights.

³⁹ The research was published in the book *Daño Transgeneracional: Consecuencias de la repression política en el Cono Sur*, Editorial LOM, Santiago de Chile, 2009. It was written within the context of the integral Project of rehabilitation of those affected by torture and other human rights violations in the Southern Cone of Latin America. A contribution to the struggle against impunity and in favour of the prevention of torture, with the support of the European Commission.

About silence

Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon

Putting into words what occurred allows a work of historization to be carried out. This includes the work of elaboration in the generation that suffered the traumatic situation and its transmission to the following generation. Its inscription in the symbolic order, in the order of culture is part of individual and collective identity. As we have pointed out before in this book, it is about trying to put into words what happened to the group of people and also, what happened in each particular case.

Silence covers two differentiable aspects: on the one hand, the social silence imposed by the State, which induced to an alienated identification with that mandate and; on the other hand, the personal necessity to maintain silence after a traumatic situation.

We stated in *Observations on the psychopathological effects of social silencing with respect to the existence of those who disappeared* (Kordon and Edelman, 1982):

“Mainly in the years 1976, 1977 and 1978 thousands of people are abducted. However, the social means of mass communication do not give any information about this. Silence is total: it is imposed as an official and repressive norm, constituting a phenomenon which we characterize as one of authentic social repudiation. But, the information is circulated underground, from mouth to mouth, among those whom one trusts. Fantasy, exaggeration, truth?. The people who receive this information question themselves. The common denominator is panic, and silence reinforces the panic. Horrendous things happen while apparently everything continues the same. Upon remembering today those events one clearly remembers the lived experiences of an almost hallucinatory nature and the atmosphere charged with danger of those days. In some cases it is supposed that silence is one of the conditions of personal survival. In other cases it is supposed that it is the condition for the survival of the missing-detainee. This latter idea is permanently stimulated in official and para-official offices.

The existence of signs, tangential information, telephone calls and even official communication on the survival of the missing-detainee was proof of the presence of that which had been disowned. This presence-absence or existence-non-existence simultaneously operated as a zone of psychotic ambiguity. The power of the mandate of silence was also evidenced in group situations, particularly in groups whose members had had until that epoch concerns of a social type. Any mention of a problem that directly or indirectly alluded to the subject of those who had disappeared was implicitly or explicitly prohibited, and the person who broke the prohibition was situated in a disturbing role and trapped by feelings of foreignness and exclusion” (Page 26).

“Confronted with a loss whose characteristics is not only given by the fact of being a close loved one, but and above all, by the manner in which it was produced: violent abductions in conditions of powerlessness, generally in their homes – which was also literally burgled – , no knowledge of the whereabouts of the victim, absolute lack of information as from that moment, almost certainty of a prolonged period of torture, uncertainty about knowing if the person was alive or not, impunity and “anonymity” of who gave the orders and executed the procedure; we have observed that compliance or rejection of the demand for silence greatly depended on the possibility of being able to elaborate, more or less normally, their bereavement” (Kordon and Edelman, 1982: 27).

This induction, which modalities we have described previously, was – without doubt – the most important, not only due to the power of the mandate and the extension of its enforcement through time, but also due to the gravity of its effects, as it configured an attempt at social disownment. And although that which was trying to be disowned was evidenced in different ways, the induction to silence reinforced fear and generated diverse defensive configurations on the individual plane.

The issue of silence and the word cannot be analyzed without taking into account the policies of memory: that is to say, the silencing and denial imposed by those in power, whose psychosocial processing has been so important in Argentina.

From another point of view, C. Nachin, sustains: *“The testimonies on the war teach us up to what point the attitude of the environment and the group of familial and social circumstances are important for the de-*

velopment of bereavement. Without doubt, it is desirable that the group of things can, in the long term, be put into words, so that they may be inscribed in the memory of humankind, and above all, in the memory of those directed involved, their families and descendants. But there are horrors and terrors that lack words to really do them justice and which, besides, find it difficult to find ears that can listen to them and understand them, so that the survivor of a drama, in principle, needs a long period of time – several years – to carry out a certain silent psychic work” (Nachin, 1997:81).

With respect to the children of the missing-detainees, the official imposition of silence was not abided by the families uniquely. Just as the Mothers, on the social scene, questioned the mandates of silence and occupied the public square to denounce the existence of those that were missing and demand that they appear alive, the imposition of silence and placing blame was not assumed homogenously in the families of the missing-detainees. In many families the subject was treated in a natural manner and the children received the real information of what had occurred. This does not mean an exact correlate between one aspect and another. That is to say, not everyone who participated in the social movement told their children about the real situation and not all the people who told their children the truth, participated in the movement. Yet the existence of the social movement constituted a reference that sustained the possibility of giving information to the children. In some families it was so natural to speak of the subject, as occurred with a woman we interviewed, who remembered that when she was in the fourth grade she realized that what was happening to her and to talk about it at school was not something *‘that normal’*: *“I went to a really cool school, I wasn’t afraid, it was a subject that was known and I had a classmate whose parents were also missing-detainees”*.

In reference to the subject of silence, it is necessary to point out two aspects that occurred to the children of the missing-detainees:

1. The type of information that was forthcoming to the children about what had happened to their parents. This was one of the most difficult subjects to approach in the first years.
2. The silence in the families, as a specific issue, beyond the fact that the information about the parents might be true or not.

The information that was given to the children was a very conflictive issue and one that we had to approach as one of the first demands that were

brought forth in the Team of Psychological Assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. In these last years, we have re-thought about what in the epoch of the dictatorship we propounded was a pathology of a secret. At that time, we considered, in general terms, that non-information to the children of the missing-detainees about what had occurred to their parents produced immediate and long term effects. In effect, we were able to prove that children who had not received real information frequently had difficulties in learning, as if the instruction of not knowing were transferred to other types of knowledge. After more than 20 years have gone by, which is practically a generation, we can say that this general appreciation has heterogeneities within its interior.

During the dictatorship and in the first years afterwards, we confused the issue of silence with the information of the truth. We have found that, although both subjects have a relationship between themselves, they are not equivalent and they have produced different effects. There could be family silence even though the truth had been informed, or even false information could have been given and not silence the parents, or exclude stories about them. We are pointing out these facts, so as to clarify polar situations, but these problems presented themselves under the most diverse modalities.

In the case of appropriated children, silence and concealment about their origin was a necessary condition for maintaining the appropriator-appropriated relationship. This subject, due to its specificity, will be approached in another part of this book.

In the case of the children of the missing-detainees that stayed within their extended family, in some cases they were given the true information about their parents. In other cases they were not told the truth by their relatives on purpose, due to the fear that this could produce an added extreme pain to the children as their parents were already absent – due to the frequent fantasy of producing damage in the children, by projecting their own pain in the children –, however the figure of their parents was present and valued, thus leaving open the space so as to incorporate the information that later they would be given.

In some cases, the children were adopted, sometimes legally, by members of the family, who made a cut that might be because they wanted to directly hide the existence of the parents or omit or prohibit any mention about their origin. On occasions, if the explanation about the absence of the parents was false, it could suggest the possibility or be interpreted as a voluntary abandonment.

On the other hand, besides what was silenced in the interior of the family, the problem that it couldn't be talked about in other places, such as school, often presented itself. Family silence can only be understood, then, in the imbrication of the different levels of subjectivity with the social situation and the social discourses.

The mandates of silence were interiorized from the less discriminated aspects of psychism. That is why we talk about alienation, because the possibility of election, of discriminate personal positioning was severely restricted, not only due to the necessity of belonging and adscription to collective ideals (that guaranteed the belonging), but to the threat against one's life. Psychic representation corresponds to the register of what is transubjective: it influenced the group.

As R. Kaës (1985) points out, a group, a collective, to be able to constitute itself, must leave out that which upon emerging could put the existence of the relationship in danger. This process is simultaneously the generator of oblivion and memory, it defines what will remain as the original nucleus of the history of the group and that which should not enter and whose imprints must be erased. This fulfills structuring functions for psychism and the relationship. It is called the *disavowing pact*.

In the same sense, the *Dictionnaire de Psychologie* defines unconscious alliances as: "A concept proposed by Rene Kaës in 1985 (...) are defined as an intersubjective psychic formation construed by the subjects of a relationship to reinforce certain processes, certain functions or certain structures in each one of them, from which they obtain such a benefit that the bond that links them acquires a decisive value for their psychic life. The group thus linked only obtains its psychic reality of the alliances, the contracts, the pacts that those subjects make and that their place in the group forces them to keep. The idea of an unconscious alliance implies one of mutual obligation, one of holding to a group intersubjective order, and eventually to an alienation of that order. The alliances must be considered under the aspect of their symmetry or their asymmetry⁴⁰".

Unconscious alliances, and specifically the denominated disavowing pact, are normal and structuring mechanisms of psychism and of relationships. So that a relationship can exist, there are some aspects that must be left outside. In the case of family relationships, between parents or substitutes and children, it is necessary to point out the asymmetry of the pact. Asymmetry which can be compared to the primary violence needed for the

40 Translation into Spanish done by the authors.

constitution of the ego. However, there are disavowing pacts which, in a manner of secondary violence, produce alienating effects on the relationship and the individuals. The mandates of the dictatorship tended to the imposition of this type of pact. In this respect, we would like to point out different situations, which are not exclusive of each other:

a) The traumatic situation can constitute itself into a stone, in a nucleus without symbolization, without ligature, in the psychism of the adults, which has a correlation in silence, in not putting into words. This silence, if it is very broad, tends to produce zones which we could call vacuums in the psychism of the following generation. We do not use the term vacuum as a counterpart of an overwhelming fullness, but rather like holes – as holes in an umbrella. We consider this silence to be an effect of what is traumatic, effect whose personal work is different from subject to subject. This silence, a stone in the psychism of the adult? - produces a vacuum in the following generation, an identifying hole. It is this vacuum, of a different magnitude according to each one, the one which the young adult will try to fill – sometimes almost compulsively – with his own search.

We use the term *stone* installed within the psychism of who is in charge of the child alluding to the effect of what is traumatic, which is transmitted in its negative form: the hole. This situation does not cover the entire personality of this adult, who can sustain his own life, and in turn, transmit emblems, models, values, insignias to the children, on other planes of life.

Sometimes when one parent disappears, the other one, over the years, is silent about what happened to the missing person. Information is concealed, and frequently not only concerning the disappearance. This silence can be extended to subjects related to their previous activism and can even cover everything that has to do with the missing-detainee. The power of the mandate of silence can be so strong that, for example, a son who had been present at the operation in which his father had been abducted, at an age where the capacity of memory is already installed, ended up accepting his aunt's version: "*Your father went to work*". "*There were 20 years of silence, my father was never mentioned in my house. My mother suffered all of this alone, and not very well*".

b) There are different types of imposed and assumed secrets, which pose the problem of the pathology of secrets and the different modalities with which the disavowing pacts can present themselves.

- A secret of adults: one or several adults decide not to talk about what they know, i.e., what is nameable and thinkable, and someone (the child) decides not to find out without realizing that he doesn't want to find out. (We shall leave the specific problems of appropriated children for another part of this book). This secret requires the participation, for different reasons (for example, respect towards the people bringing up the children, agreeing with the decision, etc.), of the adult universe. It is about a conscious decision, although it includes unconscious aspects in its motivation. It is an imposition. On the part of the child, it is about responding to the demands of not knowing in function of not putting the relationship at risk. We would like to particularly point out the asymmetrical character of this pact.

“My grandparents never told me anything until I was 10, it was sort of weird because everything was based on silence, based – in reality – on the naivety of my grandfather who thought that he could find them. He was convinced that my mother was alive and that he would find her, so there was no reason for him to give me such heartbreaking information if afterwards she was going to come back”.

“My grandmother, when I was 10, told me the truth and asked me not to say anything to my grandfather. She took me to the beach (we were in Mar del Plata), and told me that my parents had been kidnapped, first of all, the idea of kidnapping sounds more like a film to me, with a ransom, she didn't tell me a lot, she said that it had been the military on the other hand, what called my attention was that this was always referred to in the passive voice ‘they had been kidnapped’ and my grandmother doesn't speak like that. She must have rehearsed it all night. My grandmother asked me not to say anything, and I had thought all my life that my parents had abandoned me, yet in reality, I don't know what I thought that is what I used to say. Because that was also floating around when my grandfather would come to me and say ‘your mother was the best mother in the world’ my friends told me that I would say that my parents were in the countryside taking care of sheep for the hair of all my dolls, but I can't remember what I had invented. This vignette shows family silence accompanied by a secondary elaboration, over a long period of time, on the part of the woman that was interviewed.

As information about what had happened was proscribed, this to a greater or lesser degree made it difficult to include stories about the life of the parents.

We coincide with H. Faimberg (1993) concerning the fact that a secret implies organization, an interpretation of what has not been said, i.e., that what has not been said, what is concealed will be, a response to determined laws of psychological functioning in a family or social group. When the concealment has been prescribed, the elaborative work is obstructed. *“How did the silence begin? I don’t know. If we didn’t want to ask, if they didn’t want to tell. It’s not that we couldn’t name them or anything like that”*⁴¹. In some cases the children didn’t want to know, and this was an unconscious mechanism.

- Not knowing was in the register of the preconscious, since there were multiple indications, which they perceived, of that which was concealed. This is a paradox of secrets: what could not be talked about, in reality, was talked about. It was meta-communication, a non-legitimized talking; they were words, gestures, significations outside the context of what was manifestly acknowledged, outside the established code.

c) Let us remember that when, in times of the dictatorship, we collaborated with some families of the missing-detainees in order to tell them how to give the children the information of what had happened to their parents – many of these children responded with naturalness: *“I already knew”*.

Another modality of silence, *we don’t talk about it but we could*. *“Why didn’t you tell me?”*, says the son. And they respond: *“Because you never asked”*. This sequence is described by many of those that we interviewed. An apparent misunderstanding, yet it encloses within reality a modality of a disavowing pact. The parent or the grandparents, do not want to say what happened. Frequently, the manifested reason is that they don’t want to produce a superimposed pain in the child. However, one might think that not putting into words what happened on the part of the adult to the child, implies a fantasy of denial of the facts: *what happened didn’t happen*.

By not telling the child, the helpless being which lives inside the adult does not either find out the truth of the events. In turn, the child prefers not to have to find out.

All the people who were interviewed said that they did not feel a great difficulty about not knowing certain events over a long period of time, although certain inconsistencies and fractures were evident in family narra-

41 Interview with Raquel I. In Gelman, J. and Lamadrid, M. (1997). *Ni el flaco perdón de Dios*, page 197. Buenos Aires: Planeta.

tions. Did the children also want to protect their caregivers from a suffering which they perceived was linked to what was silenced? A disavowing pact at the service of maintaining a relationship of mutual sustainment. Both parties believe they are protecting the other person and themselves from certain subjects if they are outside the symbolic universe of the relationship. *“You said you didn’t want to listen”, “You said you didn’t want to know”, “You said that you already knew”, “They told me that I would cover my ears so as not to be able to hear”*. This is another form of the disavowing pact. A disavowing pact because the adult gives the response the force of law, which, in turn, reassures him. It is not because of him, because of his responsibility that the child will not find out. Here, it is also about what is lived as thanatic does not disruptively enter into the relationship and threaten it or destroy it.

d) A secret to the outside, towards the external world: school, the neighbourhood. In these cases, the child knew the situation and complied with the family mandate. This mandate had to do, fundamentally, with the fear of being reached by repression. But also present was the fear of being socially rejected due to blaming – induced by the State - the missing-detainees. *“They didn’t tell me either: don’t talk about this at school, we simply understood this was so, that some things were secret and could not be talked about. I never spoke to anyone about it until I was in third year. I told my catechism teacher and since then I haven’t stopped crying... only in fifth year did I tell a friend”*⁴². *“My paternal grandmother was told that my father was abroad. It was very difficult for me. I didn’t know up to what point this lie could sustain her. I couldn’t say anything at school, I had to say that they had been in a car accident. I always felt different, I hid the situation, I was ashamed, I could not put it into words”*.

To keep the secret in school and with my friends had a high cost, concerning my socialization: *“How could I have friends if I couldn’t tell them about what was the most important thing to me”?* - it deprived them from the support of their natural groups. In some cases, they would tell someone about the situation in a confidential manner.

We would like to point out some specific characteristics and situations:

- Manifest family imposition
- The children took upon themselves the mandate which was not spo-

42 Ibid, page 41.

ken. In both cases they accepted the order with the idea that abiding it would allow them to maintain the love of their caregivers.

- The situation was silenced with the fantasy of protecting the family. Not talking had as a reference another person who had to be protected, not themselves.

- They felt afraid of rejection if they talked to friends at school. One woman who we interviewed said: *“I remember primary school as a period of isolation... I was afraid that if I told anyone that my father was a missing-detainee, they would say bad things about him and that they would reject me... At home they never told me not to talk about it”*.

- They felt ashamed that their situation would be known, to appear different from the other children: a girl used to call her uncle and aunt, with whom she lived, *“Mom and Dad”* only when she was at school.

“Before starting school I didn’t feel different from the other kids. The problem arose when they asked me about my father at school. I would think: What do I say? I invented something then I realized that they all knew, but no one talked about it. That was at an act of HIJOS. At first I didn’t want to talk about it but at the last minute I got my courage up. My friends hugged me. I then realized that all of them knew.

e) Silence and secrecy sustained by the adults but not taken up by the children.

In these cases, in spite of the difficulties of the adults in telling the truth, the children actively went in search of it. This activity was sometimes maintained, in turn, in secrecy with respect to the adults of the family. This subject of the adult silence and the lack of child complicity took on a broad spectrum. A person who we interviewed told us: *“I always had the feeling that something was being concealed from me and I would snoop around to try and find out what it was. I was very curious. I always read the flip side of the papers we used to scribble on”*. *“I would fight with my mother, my grandmother and my aunt. I said, first the military took him away and then after, the family made him disappear. Two months into therapy I started to bombard my mother with questions. I was very angry at her, but I don’t hold it against her as it must have been very difficult for her and she managed to pull the family through. I always knew what had happened, it was always a memory but I didn’t know if it was true or not. I always knew.”*

f) Silence in the children.

In the families committed to the public activity of the search for those who had disappeared and who were not silent about what had happened, many children, especially during the period of latency, avoided talking about the subject. This attitude brought about feelings of anguish amongst the relatives, since they took it as a denial of what had happened. Frequently, a consequence of this was a compulsive insistence on the part of the adults to talk about the subject and rejection or hostility on the part of the children. Other times, families which had told the children the truth, were subjected to mandates of silence, and therefore readily accepted avoiding the subject.

Bibliography

Please refer to the bibliography of the following article.

Trauma and transgenerational transmission of what is traumatic

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

We consider that psychism is an open system, susceptible of modifications since the subject is a psychosocial subject and a subject of relationships, whose movements continue operating all through life.

The maternal history and its transgenerational prehistory, reactivated in the first exchanges with the baby, constitute – for the baby – his first references of the internal world. Even in the manner in which a mother holds her baby, carries him, cradles him, feeds him and talks to him, etc. expresses in a concentrated manner the biological, psychological and social network which is inscribed in her, and this has a fundamental role in the new relationship.

This is how, from the beginning, we can see the incidence of the environment in psychism as well as the inter and transgenerational structuring operations.

Critical situations, in their movements of opening and closing, of non-support and re-support, of de-identifications and re-identifications, constitute moments which question the stability and permanence and at the same time, produce new recompositions.

Births and deaths are situations which provoke intense psychic and social movements in families. In turn, determined events, at any age, can provoke psychic effects or traumatic consequences in the subject, which will occupy a relevant place all along his life and will influence the imaginary and symbolic processes of his children.

New experiences, personal or familial, or even those common to a people or a culture, force the subject and the groups in which he participates to carry out a work of elaboration. When these are not fully elaborated, they can affect several generations.

What is traumatic infects and modifies, sometimes in an important manner, the systems of values, myths, fantasies and beliefs in the personal, family and social scopes and it is articulated with the socially predominant ideals and chains of significations. So it would be valid to affirm, that it can be constituted into an aspect of personal identity.

Trauma

Firstly we will develop conceptual ideas and then continue with the psychological implications in the children of the missing-detainees. Different psychiatric, psychological and psychoanalytical schools describe what is traumatic in an equivalent manner to the effects it produces, in spite of the differences in conception concerning its etiology, psychodynamic mechanisms and incidence in the structure of the Ego.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1972:467-471) define the concept of trauma as that of an *“experience which in a short time contributes such a great increase of excitement to psychic life, that its demise or elaboration through normal or habitual means fails, which will inevitably lead to lasting disorders in energetic functioning”*. This can come about as the result of one sole and very violent event or by the sum of several events, altering the economy of psychism and the principles which rule psychic life. In this case, as well as in other definitions, the centre is located in the magnitude of traumatic stimulus, in relation to the dis-organizing effect which it produces on psychism.

Laplanche, following Freud, defines traumatic neurosis as that in which the symptoms are consecutive to an emotional shock, linked to a life-threatening situation or to a threat against the integrity of the subject, where the trauma possesses a determinant part in the content of the symptoms (nightmares, mental repetition of the traumatic event, reaction of automatic anguish with somatic and neuro-vegetative commitment: palpitations, perspiration, suffocation, colics, etc.).

Some authors, like Laplanche, – and in our country Silvia Bleichmar – consider, however, that what is traumatic is at the same time constitutive and constituent of psychic functioning, and that as from the necessity of psychism to elaborate the external and internal stimuli which it receives, its complexity and evolution is produced. Those excesses of stimuli which have not been metabolized, which have not been transcribed, will persist as traumatic remains.

When defining post-traumatic stress, the DSM-IV points out three different levels of commitment when faced with the traumatic situation: direct participation, presence as a witness of the traumatic event and the knowledge of the traumatic event, but only as the receptor of the information. We think that the different level of commitment and corporal exposure, as well as the different degree of commitment of the perceptual apparatus, can influence the subsequent affectation.

Already in 1919, in *Introduction to the symposium on the neurosis of war*, Freud talked about an ego which defends itself from a real danger, a danger of death present in the etiology of these neuroses. Later, in 1926, he describes a type of anguish present when confronted with a real external danger.

In the article “Social trauma and psychism” (Kordon, Edelman, Lagos and Kersner, 2000), we pointed out:

“... the description of etiology and psycho-dynamics of war neuroses and the concept of real anguish opened, as from psychoanalysis, the acknowledgement of those situations of social life which, due to their characteristics, constitute a threat to the life of the subject and a source of production of psychic suffering.

The traumatic effect is given because there is a remnant of anguish without symbolization, not representable by means of word. According to Freud, this non-representable anguish corresponds to non-linked energy.

When the defences are overcome, this anguish, automatic anguish, overwhelms the ego. A narcissistic regression is produced that does allow the subject to implement an effective defence, of a neurotic nature, as occurs in the case in which anguish functions as sign-anguish. These moments may be considered as psychotic moments in which there does not exist an ego capable of establishing a command to implement adequate measures to exercise some protection over the subject. In the best of cases, the defence mechanisms are archaic and ineffective for maintaining a neurotic functioning.

Sign-anguish is associated to fear. This functions somewhat like a vaccine, it is a circumscribed and controlled reaction, which allows psychism to organize its self-defence, either in neurotic or normal terms. Automatic-anguish is, in turn, associated to panic. This – as we have already stated – overwhelms the ego, leaving the subject paralysed when faced with danger.

The problems of trauma are linked not only to the de-structuring amount of stimuli, but also to the sense which this acquires for each person and to the possibility of finding or maintaining adequate support for the psychism⁴³.

43 In the novel Austerlitz, by W. G. Sebald, Agata (a character in the novel) before being taken to a concentration camp, walks around her house repeating “*I don’t understand, I don’t understand*”. It is obvious that there is a request for the continuity of the self as from the loss of sense.

But both the individual sense of the trauma as well as the possibility of maintaining or obtaining adequate support are linked, in these cases, to the social processing of the traumatic situation. This, of course, associated to the complementary series of each subject.

In accordance to our concept of trauma, a relationship of interiness exists between causal factors, the previous conformation of personality, the relationship situations, the process of traumatization, group support and the sustainment which the subject counts on, the identifying models, the discourse and the systems of hegemonic collective ideals, psychological effects, the possibilities of personal and social elaboration of the affectation due to the trauma and the phenomena of re-traumatization. Besides the fortitude of the ego and of the previous conditions of personality, factors which are undoubtedly important, such as the comprehension of the situation, the previous ideological positioning, feeling a part of a transsubjective group which in the social plane shares a project, the sustaining of a mature level of belonging with respect to the group of which one is a member are important factors in relation to the incidence of the traumatic situation in subjectivity and to the possibility of personal preservation”.

If the person cannot defend himself from thanatic action and psychic functioning does not manage to elaborate the occurred events or appropriate them and incorporate them as metabolized and homogeneous aspects within psychism as a whole, the impact of what happened will remain installed as a foreign body.

There are innumerable examples of how traumatic stimuli re-appear in a mode of repetition: Primo Levi (1987), for example, describes how already liberated and back in his home in Turin, he continued to walk looking down at the floor, which is what he used to do in the concentration camp in search of something to eat or some object that might become valuable.

In a research on torture (Kordon, Edelman, Nicoletti, Lagos, Bozzolo y Kandel, 1983) carried out on 27 patients who had been tortured, we found numerous examples of this situation.

Silvia Bleichman (2004) has studied traumatic register in children that had lived through situations of war in Central America. There, there clearly appears what she considers as inscriptions as if they were signs of percep-

tion⁴⁴. Following the Freudian perspective, this author points out that what is archaic remains as a fragment of psychic reality in a strict sense. This would be the remains that stay in relation with the flooding of what is traumatic, in place of words, or of associations.

In some cases, the responses that the subject tries to implement when faced with the traumatic situation enter into conflict with his system of values. Thus the person enters into crisis in relation to self-esteem or with his identity in general. In this case, due to how these implemented responses are unacceptable to the ego itself, a part of the lived experiences are not metabolized, they remain silent and will stay uncommunicated.

Transmission of what is traumatic

Concerning the mechanisms of transmission of what is traumatic, there are different theoretical perspectives. However, what is beyond doubt, in accordance to the studies carried out in different populations that suffered this type of affectation in the XXth century and in different places in the world (the Armenian genocide, the Nazi concentration camps, the Holocaust, P.O.Ws. of the Second World War, the forced internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII, the survivors of the atomic bombs, the Vietnam War, the dictatorships in Chile, South Africa and, of course, Argentina), is that the traumatic situation influences not only the people who suffer it directly but also the social body as a whole and it will impact several generations.

About transmission

All the psychoanalysts who work in problems of transmission coincide in pointing out that psychism is constituted and developed in the interior of an intersubjective relationship and a social matrix. They underline the importance of the social tie and of culture as supporting agents of individual psychic fact.

44 *“The concept of ‘perception-sign’ is a psychoanalytical, metapsychological concept that accounts for the psychic elements which are not ordered under the legality of the unconscious or the preconscious, which can manifest themselves yet without being conscious, and that manifest themselves in compulsive modalities in psychic life, in the traumatic references not buried by memory and oblivion, detached from lived experience itself, non-articulable”*. Silvia Bleichmar. Simbolizaciones de transición: una clínica abierta a lo real.

In general, within the transmission, the chains of meaning and of sense are put at stake. In the case of big social groups that are affected, collectively elaborated social representations play an important role. The significations and the chain of sense can be highly complex, and in some cases, can become conflictive or have antagonistic values. This type of transmission operates through identifications.

In the exchange between generations, values, beliefs, habits, norms and competence are constructed and maintained, and they will guarantee family, group and cultural continuity.

Silvia Gomel (1997:18) states: "*I propose to focus the haulage between generations as from three axes: what is transcultural, the social and familial imaginary significations and what does not have accession to the representational field*". The way which she proposes for the first two axes, as those used for transmission, are: familial discourse, fantasy trauma and the regime of identifications.

The passive transmission or reception of a foreign object proceeding from a previous generation never exists. And although the psychic reality of the parents will model that of the children, it is never modeled in a passive manner; on the contrary, it implies an active work on the part of the children.

The psychic life of the newborn that comes into the world is effectively constructed by the interrelationship with the psychic life of those around him, and it is in this manner, that marked by the psychic life of his parents, he is also marked through them, by their ancestors.

Some schools state a clear distinction between intergenerational influences and transgenerational influences. The former are the ones produced between adjacent generations of a direct relationship. The latter are produced through the succession of generations: the psychic contents of the children can be marked by the psychic functioning of the grandparents or of the ancestors they have never met, but whose psychic life has marked their own parents.

In any case, the difference between what is inter, what is trans and what is multigenerational are not clear.

Transmission of what is traumatic

The structuring moments of psychism, related to the transmission processes of one generation to another have been violently marked for the children of the missing-detainees, by a situation of limit in relation to the possibility of the preservation of psychism and of relationships. The absence of the progenitors – due to their disappearance – the difficult elaboration of the bereavement of the grandparents due to the loss of their children and the de-structuring and depressive lived experiences of the family circle are some of the grave situations that leave traumatizing imprints which transcend generations.

Let us go into more detail concerning the issue of the mechanisms of transmission of what is traumatic which have been studied from the psychoanalytical and psychodynamics perspective.

When traumatic stimulus cannot be elaborated, the traumatic situation remains encapsulated, fenced in and encysted like a stone in psychism. It is a traumatic and traumatizing cyst. This cyst, together with the effects which it produces in personal and family space, is transmitted to the children and to the later generations, organized either as ambiguous zones installed in the relationship and in the insertion of the relationship in the family network with which the family functions, or as a family secret of which there are many hints, but about which one basic condition exists: *this cannot be talked about*. Therefore, the stone is accompanied by a secret, a secret which in the long run will be simultaneously exhibited and concealed.

Some authors (Abraham and Torok, 2005; Tisseron, Rand and Nachin, 1997) predominantly define this process as an intrapsychic phenomenon that will have effects in later generations. Abraham and Torok (2005) call the mechanism *inclusion*, and the psychic configuration that is produced, *crypt*. In the case of the crypt, the function of the “guardian of the cemetery” belongs to the ego. These same authors point out that originally every secret is necessarily shared.

In turn, R. Kaës (1996) puts emphasis on the scope of intersubjectivity and transubjectivity and places these problems within the disavowing pacts, which define what must be left out so that the relationship can sustain itself.

Silvia Gomel (1997) sustains: “*Frequently, the weight of what is ancestral that hasn’t been developed invades the familial field, blocking the circulation of fantasies. Unrepresented issues which haven’t been psychically integrated in one generation linger in the family in the manner*

of the two times of the trauma, times linked not only to the unfolding of a psychic apparatus but also to the temporality of what is genealogical” (Page 40).

When one generation does not carry out the work of psychic elaboration of a trauma, it does not go through bereavement, and so a cleavage is produced in which the significant event that has not been able to be developed remains encapsulated. This cleavage will affect the later generations. The disavowing pact will sustain that which remains encapsulated in psychism within what is inter and transsubjective.

The event in question is present in the person who lives it; whether conscious or preconscious, but the subject cannot talk about it.

It is thus that a double phenomenon is produced in the first generation: the trauma remains encapsulated in the subject. But at the same time, a pact of silence is produced between the subject and the others who either know or have an intuition of the content of what happened. That is to say, what is fenced in must remain outside or be included within each one. Sometimes the traumatic event affects one member of the relationship, while in other cases it affects all of them. Shared silence necessarily implies the participation of others.

R. Kaës (1996) affirms: *“The pathology of transmission, although it affects one subject in his singularity, it cannot be – by definition – an attribute of that subject. It is more like a formation which acquires a function within this double psychic economy: it is ‘sustained’ in the psychic process of the singular subject and in the psychic process of the intersubjective group.”* (Page 27)⁴⁵.

Abraham and Torok established the following concept with respect to what happens in each one of the three generations. In the first generation, what is traumatic is presented as what cannot be said⁴⁶, it is known and

45 In some cases it is not about a pact but a disavowing alliance. It is about an agreement to silence events, which the culture one belongs to obliges one to repress and whose exhibition leaves intimacy vulnerable and affects modesty. For example, to not describe in detail certain sexual tortures.

46 Agamben debates a certain application of the term unspeakable, which is applied to the individual subject, as a qualifying adjective to the concentration camps, and in particular to Auschwitz, since this would lead to deny the possibility of giving testimony on them *“Because of this, those who today vindicate the unspeakableness of Auschwitz should be more cautious in their affirmations. If they claim that Auschwitz was a unique event, which the witness, when confronted with this statement must try in some manner to sustain words to the evidence of something which is impossible to say, then they are right. But if, combining*

recognized yet it cannot be spoken about. A crypt and a space are produced in which that which was not said, is locked up. The second generation perceives clues about what has not been said. The subject will be the bearer of a phantom that will live inside him and which will inherit that which was encrypted. This phantom operates in his unconscious. The event cannot be the object of any oral representation. Its contents are not known, and its existence is only felt. The events pass on to the order of what cannot be named. In the third generation, the events have turned into something unthinkable: one does not know about the existence itself of a secret that burdens a non-solved trauma in the first generation and which produces symptoms (which are apparently inexplicable). The subject can have feelings, images or emotions that might seem strange, inexplicable. And he can show actions linked to this trauma.

For Nicolás Abraham, the influences between generations are not produced around psychic contents that would be present in hollow, but rather around broken symbols whose fragments have exploded.

Claude Nachin (1989), inspiring himself on the research carried out by Henri Wallon (1942), has pointed to this approach through the consideration of non-verbal forms of symbolization. He states that the psychic symbol contains four aspects: representative, affective, motor and verbal. These four series of particularities constitute an inseparable group, where each one participates in the psychic appropriation of its story on the part of the human being. It is then that it is possible to think of the psychic dynamics between generations taking into account the necessary introjection, within

*what it has of uniqueness with what it has of unspeakable, makes Auschwitz a reality absolutely separate from language; if they cancel, in an Islamic person, the relationship between what is impossible and possible of saying (in relation to) what constitutes testimony, without knowing it, they are repeating the gesture of the Nazis, they are showing themselves secretly in solidarity with the Arcanum imperii. Their silence contains the risk of duplicating the sarcastic warning which the SS transmitted to the inhabitants of the camps, which Levi transcribes at the beginning of *The drowned and the saved*: In whatever way this war ends, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to give testimony of it, but even if one of you manages to escape, the world would not believe you. Perhaps there would be suspicion, debate, investigation by historians, yet there will never be any certainty, because, with you, all proof will be destroyed. And even if some piece of evidence were to survive, and although one of you manages to survive, people will say that the stories you tell are too monstrous to be believed: they will say that it is propaganda of the Allies, and they will believe us as we will deny everything, they won't believe you. The story of Lager, it will be us who will write it Levi 2, Page:11)"* We fully coincide with Agamben's appreciation of this.

the ego and the group which the subject belongs to, of each one of the four components of the symbol linked to complementarity, and to the congruence of the forms of the messages that go along each one of the human interfaces and which contribute to its constitution.

When the explosion comes about, marks can be left in one or another component.

The signs of perception function as indicators and are lived and appear in the person who directly suffered the trauma. But, when a symbol explodes within a trauma, the fragment can function as an indicator not only in the person who lived it but also in its transmission to the later generations.

Haydee Faimberg (1996) sustains the thesis of identifying telescoping, that is to say, of the possibility of an identification alienated with a genealogical ancestor, by means of a situation of silence which has prevented its elaboration. When silence is maintained within the modality of a secret, there is an organization of what has not been said.

In summary, what has not been metabolized has direct effects in the life of whomever suffers it, restricting the capacities of the ego, promoting performances, favouring the irruption of greater pathologies or producing more specific symptoms. It also affects following generations in different ways.

In the problems of the children of the missing-detainees, we have to think that the trauma affects several generations: grandparents, that is to say, the parents of those who disappeared, and the siblings of those that disappeared, who directly suffered the traumatic situation. Also the partners of those who disappeared, i.e., fathers and/or mothers of those who are a specific object of this research.

In reference to the children, then, they also directly suffered the traumatic affectation and, besides, are the inheritors of the generations that lived the trauma.

In relation to their direct affectation, they had different perceptions, even in evolving moments in which the Ego was not yet established⁴⁷.

47 One can only speak of trauma when the Ego has already been conformed: *“Traumatic has to do with a position taken by the ego, of the subject who sees himself confronted with the unexpected. One of the things that proposes what is traumatic is precisely unpreparedness, which cannot be of the unconscious because the unconscious is not experiential nor volitional. That pertains to the ego. In that sense and in strict terms, for there to be trauma there must be a subject, there has to be an established ego, this is what we think when we talk about trauma suffered by the people whom we work with”*. Silvia Bleichmar. Transcription of an athenaeum at EATIP, July 2005.

Therefore, in this case in which the affectation was multigenerational, it is difficult to discriminate, in most cases, the incidence of that which was inter and transgenerationally transmitted from the traumatic stimuli directly lived and suffered. In spite of this difficulty, this can be visualized with greater discernment within the framework of clinical treatment. The predominance of one aspect or another is different from one case to another.

We have approached the problems of identity and of fantasies, on the one side; and of silence and bereavement in families in other chapters. However, these include aspects that could be understood as products of transmission. The separation is only due to reasons of how we wanted to present our work.

In the case of a young woman who saw how her mother was abducted when she was five years old, and heard and obeyed her mother's shouts of run, run directed towards her and her younger brother during the interview, the traumatic burden of this episode becomes evident. When she tries to talk about it, she has a crisis of anguish, and weeps uncontrollably. She tells me that on different occasions she goes back to the place but does not know why: *"Afterwards, I don't remember anything, what my aunt used to tell me was, that when she came to pick me up, I was repeating 'they jumped through the window' I suppose that they wanted to escape, and that I would feel frightened whenever I heard the bell ringing or knocking at the door, because the raid was violent they had come with an Army truck, and they had surrounded the whole block"*.

Many young adults, when they were very young, have been violently separated from their parents and taken to asylums or orphanages for a considerable time until some relative came for them. In these cases, the changes in smell, sounds, temperatures, images, flavours which they perceived, the manner in which they were corporally held implied violent modifications which not in every case could be metabolized.

These problems are linked to the relationship of the child with his object of satisfaction and questions the need for its continuity and the pathogenic effect of its abrupt rupture. It is not the same if the first object of satisfaction disappears or comes and goes. For instance, the women who work and leave their children in the care of someone else, come back. This does not seem to greatly generate problems. This issue extends itself to the ambit in a broader sense, in which we can consider the ecosystem. Children will become altered with abrupt changes in the environment.

And even though, theoretically, it is considered that one can only talk

about trauma when the ego is already constituted as such, i.e., when a stimulus overwhelms the defences which the ego implements, we consider that there is a type of affectation produced by early traumatic situations, such as the violent separation from the mother, which leaves fragmented remains navigating in the psychism.

Certain symptoms which appear or are inferred from the interviews with some of the children of the missing-detainees, such as difficulties with symbolizations, strange behaviours, tendency to the language of action, or psychosomatic reactions seem to constitute, in effect, traumatic remains that come forth from that abrupt deprivation and the changes that accompanied it in that period, which continue to produce effects up to the present.

In the novel, *Austerlitz*, by Winfried George Sebald, the protagonist when he is an adult, goes on vacation to Marienbad with his girlfriend. He is absentminded, with lived experiences of strangeness and perplexity. She cannot comprehend the sense of what is happening. Years later, he will find out that he had gone on vacation to that same place with his parents when he was very young and before they had sent him to England with a group of children so as to save him from the Nazis. When the memories emerge, enabled by other memories that bring forth information and by photos, these take on a structure of an original fantasy: a child sees a scene.

That psychic state of impossibility of contact with his girlfriend can be explained, then, as a primitive defence in which, faced with the possibility of the memory, there is a retraction, a rupture of the contact and almost de-personalization.

One of those whom we interviewed said: *“My parents waved a white flag to get me out, I was one year and four months old. At that moment there was a shootout and my mother was killed, I stayed with a neighbor who then took me to Casa Cuna (an orphanage). The following day my grandparents came, but it took them 15 to 20 days until they managed to get me out of there. They told me that I cried the whole time”*. This story, of course, was what his grandparents told him.

Another daughter of missing-detainees parents says that she was born in captivity at a place where they were not carrying out any *“baby trade”*. Approximately two weeks later she was taken to the place where her maternal grandparents lived, several hundred kilometres from where she had been born. As they did not find her grandparents, they left her on the steps of the threshold of the house of some other relatives with a made-up letter.

Another woman interviewed states that after her parents disappeared,

she and her older brother were taken to an orphanage and remained there until a social worker published a photo of them in the newspapers claiming for their relatives to appear. In this manner she was able to place us in the care of one of my grandmothers who lived in another city.

Another interviewed person states that she was found by her grandmother in the San Martin Courthouse eight days after her parents had been abducted.

In all these cases, the description of the events is considered important by those interviewed. The narration produces intense anguish in them and they consider them to be founding marks in their lives.

Our hypothesis is that these episodes of separation and traumatic violence have not been harmless. And although they might not necessarily present symptoms, in most cases they have left imprints whose effects do not appear to be associated by the children in a manifest manner, not even by associative ideas with certain symptomatic behavior which arises in their adult life.

Another young adult legally adopted by his uncle and aunt so as not to be, according to his own words "*an abortion of nature*", describes impulsive attitudes, a tendency towards acting, violent behavior which seem to be more linked to the persistence of archaic signs corresponding to the traumas he lived through rather than to deficits in his substitute family.

In the process of construction of the image of the parents, confronting the type of response that the children implemented due to the abduction and captivity of their parents can be conflictive and even some cases take on a traumatic character. That which the missing father might have felt constituted a conflict between self-conservation and self-preservation, and the type of solution that he implemented when faced with this conflict, can acquire a traumatic character for the child, above all when this behavior appears to be linked to the protection of the child.

"I don't know why they didn't take me too. Sometimes I thought that my father had talked (betrayed his companions) Later I found out he hadn't". In this case it is about a conflict described as a violent irruption to psychic life, produced not by an event from reality but from a fantasized interpretation. A conflict, which at times, presents a predominantly neurotic character; while in others, a traumatic one.

We have omitted other examples which have arisen from our interviews due to the respect for privacy and to avoid the risk of some retraumatizing effect in case it is read. For these same reasons, we have omitted examples of psychotic

decompensations and psychopathic actings which are clearly linked to the incidence of what is traumatic.

“Talking with my sister she said that she had imagined a swamp and I said I imagined a desert (referring to where we thought our parents were travelling)”.

“I had a sort of image that first they had been put in cold water and after in hot water, they were images similar to that of a concentration camp”.

“My grandfather prayed every day to the Saint of the day. He had photos of my mom and dad and would show them to me. I imagined that my parents were travelling in a plane that never landed. When my grandmother was going to travel I accompanied her to Ezeiza (the international airport) to see her off I thought she was never going to return. With my own daughter I felt ‘something is going to happen to me’”.

In these three vignettes, the content of the material refers to what is traumatic yet it has been able to be represented in the structure of fantasy, which implies, in spite of the impact of the images, a certain work of elaboration.

“My mother used to spend the days crying, whether she was sweeping or making the beds. So as to avoid more suffering, I didn’t ask her anything. She told me that she could not talk to anyone, she gave me a series of instructions and indications of how to take care of myself. Even today she is filled with a great paranoia”. Here the correlation between the maternal trauma and the overadapted behavior of the daughter is evident in the process of bereavement.

Identity, fantasy and phantom

According to the degree of affectation and/or development of symbolic capacity, different psychic products of the traumatic situation can be analysed. On the one hand, in the continuum between primitive fantasies and secondary fantasies⁴⁸ and in the conflicts between the Ego and the Ideal of the Ego, and more broadly between the Ego and the Superego, one notices an elaborative psychic work of different levels of development. On the other hand, the effect of what is traumatic presents itself, the presence of the phantom of the progenitors, which can cover partial aspects of the Ego

⁴⁸ The latter are more elaborated fantasies, and they are structured as from personal history.

or flood it. This appears, as we have already pointed out, as an intrusion in psychism, as a heterogeneous product, as a persistence of what is archaic which operates as an embedded stone, as a fullness that occupies a vacuum in the subject.

A phantom which possesses, a phantom which demands that one take charge of the story, primitive fantasies, highly developed fantasies. All simultaneously present in an oscillating movement which marks the predominance of one or another in determined people or at determined moments.

The following vignettes, while they evidence how psychism is constituted in intersubjectivity, they state the problem of the path between phantom and fantasy in the identifying process, in a movement of continuities and ruptures.

“I imagined that my father was walking on a mountain, that he reached an electricity pole, that there were lights. This was when my mother told me about my father”. In this case, it is about a conscious fantasy linked to images provided by culture.

“I think about what my father would have wanted me to do. I feel irresponsible about not doing”. This is a conflict between the Ego and the Superego.

Another young woman dreams that she is in the auditorium of a university with a banner of her mother’s photo. Her mother appears behind in black and white and tells her affectionately to give her the banner, that from that moment on she will be in charge of carrying it. In this case the dream can be understood as an expression of the work of elaboration, in relation to the superego’s mandate of sustaining the presence of the missing mother.

“In reality when I was a kid I always knew what was happening and I felt close to my father. It was a different presence, it was like Santa Claus, a fantasy to believe in something nice. I thought that at night, my father would come into my room to tuck me in (while I was sleeping).”

“I have a statement which a bit silly, but I wrote it when I was younger and I carry it in my wallet. I wish that today you were here with me.”

“At the university we had to do a work called dreams and desires of 2000, and I did ‘to live one day with my mother’.

“I feel very happy when they say I look just like my mother.”

In these three examples, desires are expressed manifestly.

“But I also think that what I am gets distorted. Not so long ago, at a moment of mystical delirium, I discovered where all the missing-detainees were. It was through an analogy with the film ‘Being John Malkovich’.

I used to explain it like this: The characters occupy the body of the actor and some can even live with them, but John Cusack dominates and annuls Malkovich. So, those who disappeared want to be John Malkovich, i.e., his children, and they are inside them, living together and imposing personalities, tastes and desires”.

“As everyone, I feel that in some things I am too similar to her. I don’t know if this is conscious or not, but I believe she is a part of me. That those who disappeared resist within their descendents”⁴⁹.

“I know that I repeat behaviours and that my father or that which constituted him gets inside of me and sometimes manages me like a puppet”⁵⁰.

In these examples there is a strong presence of the missing parent as a phantom accompanied by a work of what is symbolic which gives structure to the story.

“When I was 23 I suffered a great depression. I had gone to live with a friend, I was 8 months without working, there was a crisis in my group at the university and I broke off with my boyfriend. I was at the age my mother was when she had been abducted, but I saw that in therapy. I hadn’t seen the link. It seemed as if life just finished there”.

“I am trying to do (things), to shift from my place as a victim, my mother repeats that we are victims and we have to suffer. My profile is of a person who suffers, I tried to run away, I do things but I suffer for this and that. I smoke a lot, I am overwrought with anxiety.”

After his parents were abducted, a child was left in Casa Cuna by the task group, where he remained between 15 and 20 days, until his grandparents managed to get him. When he was 21, and without any subjective register of conflict concerning the disappearance of his parents, he went to Bariloche with some friends. Around the campfire, the caretaker of the camping site whose name was the same as his father, told the group that his girlfriend had been murdered and that was the reason he had come to live to Bariloche. When they left the cabin, a friend of his asked him why he had not said anything about his own situation. The following day they returned, he drank a bit of gin, called the caretaker outside and told him his story, crying uncontrollably. The man embraced him, and told him that he

49 Eugenia Guevara, “Lugar de ausencias”. Magazine Tres Puntos, Number 290, year 2001.

50 Ibid, page 49.

must go on with his life. He doesn't remember anything, but his friends tell him that they had to take him away and that he was crying and saying that he wanted to remain with his father. After this, he was several days feeling as if a truck had run him over. On another occasion he was with a friend, the parents and the sister of his friend, at their house: "*Nothing special was happening. There was an environment of family harmony. I sat down at the table and could not eat because my hands were shaking so much*".

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State terrorism: second generation

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“Each one of us ends up putting things in order so as to be able to digest what happened. At one moment I covered it up, my mother had not finished elaborating this. The good thing is trying to see how the pieces fit together. The idea of a disappearance is very perverse, it marks you”.

From a daughter of a missing-detainee father.

This research has been carried out in the institutional environment of the Argentine Team of Psychosocial Work and Research (EATIP), within a framework of work carried out by four Latin American centres: CINTRAS, GTNM/RJ, SERSOC and EATIP, during 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Our objective was to carry out a multi-centred research on *transgenerational damage* with the aim to contribute methodologies and programmes of specific therapeutic intervention with respect to the subject, to create awareness in the scientific world and to contribute new information that favours the elaboration of health guidelines and politics destined to integral reparation. We consider that *“the importance of the social context in the transmission of transgenerational damage, and the retraumatizing incidence of impunity in individual and collective bereavement, constitute a matter of obligatory study which represents a legacy for future generations”*.

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Presentation

This work tries to inscribe itself in the deep process of the construction of the collective memory which has been carried forth by the social, human rights and political movement of Argentina.

State terrorism had multiple psychological effects on the population in general and, more specifically, in those directly affected and their families, constituting what we call *traumatic situations of social origin*. With this term we allude to those repressive situations produced from the State that violently invaded the life of the subject.

We dedicate ourselves to this task taking into account the relationship between traumatic situations of social origin and subjectivity, as well as the multi and transgenerational character of the affectation, convinced that what is traumatic and not elaborated in one generation is transmitted onto the following ones.

Unlike what happened with the Nazi genocide and other traumatic experiences of these characteristics which have needed more than one generation to come out of the silence and process what happened, in Argentina, in spite of the deepness of the damage, the process of social elaboration began at a very early stage – during the last dictatorship.

We set out to deepen the analysis of the psychological consequences in the second generation of those affected by State terrorism, describing some specific problems in the structuring and functioning of its psychism and its articulation with the social context.

The work is centred on the characteristics that the affectation took on in the different groups of children (missing-detainees, former missing-detainees, those exiled, those internally displaced and political prisoners) whose childhood elapsed during the dictatorship or who had been born during this period, as well as children born later during constitutional governments.

We have put special emphasis on defining the clinical axes so as to be able to analyse different aspects within the different groups that were studied: the role of silence, the different bereavements, the mode of processing the information about what happened in the families, the losses and up-

rootings, considering, in all the cases, specific issues according to the type of affectation suffered.

With the purpose of presenting the material as clearly as possible, we have made some divisions and categories which allow us to refer to some specific or outstanding characteristics of the analysed groups. However, it is necessary to clarify that we are not talking about pure categories, since there is not only an overlapping of them (for instance, the child of a missing-detainee father and a political prisoner mother) but also in some cases, the affectation varied in its modality through time (for instance, the child of a political prisoner who was later released and whose family later went into exile).

Our deepest gratitude and affection is for all those young adults that we interviewed, who have collaborated selflessly and uncompromisingly in this research.

Approximations for a conceptual development: "psychic marks"

We consider that the situations of political repression that the second generation has gone through have left marks in the psychism of those affected.

We understand the concept of *psychic marks* to be similar to that of imprints, of identifying inscriptions, of characteristic features. For this, we have retaken the Freudian concept of mnemonic imprint. Freud states with respect to this term: "... *the manner in which events are inscribed in memory. (...) Persist in a permanent manner, and they are reactivated only when they are cathected*" (Laplace and Pontalis, 1981:177).

For their part, psychic marks would be identifying milestones, with an important influence in the constitution of the identity of the subject. They behave as a sort of organizer of a series of aspects of psychic life and, given their functioning as a structuring part of identity, they will say something of the subject himself and of his relationship to others.

And although there is a common territory among the concepts of psychic mark and mnemonic imprint, the fundamental difference is that the latter does not necessarily form part of the identity, but rather, remains as a psychic inscription that may or may not be reactivated as a memory when faced with determined stimuli. Unlike imprints, psychic marks always have a specific weight at the identifying level.

Within the specific problems related to those traumatic situations that will leave a mark in the psychism of the subjects, we consider that these

marks will function as traumatic imprints or not according to the mode and degree of elaboration which in that particular psyche they have been able to achieve. At the extreme of greater psychic elaboration, these imprints can remain as representations related to experience, memory, learning and the possibility of sublimation. At the other extreme, they can be pathological inscriptions, generators of emotional disturbances. The psychic mark will remain in these cases without any possibility of ligature or elaboration, as an open wound or traumatic remains, turning into symptoms or pathological manifestations (limitations and restrictions to the development of the ego, psychosomatic disorders, anguishing and repetitive dreams, structure of fragile personality or one which is markedly rigid and defensive, among others).

Between both these modalities there exist a number of external and internal factors that make the elaboration either more possible or more difficult.

We have clarified this with respect to the term mark so that it is not understood as a stigma that will necessarily determine the course of life of the affected person with inevitable pathological consequences, but rather that it will function as an aspect linked to identity, forming part of the unique and specific features which are characteristic to each subject in particular.

In this sense, we consider that the term psychic mark alludes to a point where the concepts of trauma (understood as that event which due to its intensity and quality is potentially pathogenic, depending upon the defensive capacity and the psychic elaboration) and the narcissistic sphere of the subject (with what it implies in the constitution of personal identity throughout history, in its inter-relationship with significant others) are intertwined.

Given that in this article we will use an extract of the complete work, we will only refer to the considerations that have to do with the children of those exiled and of political prisoners.

About the children of those exiled

Exile is defined as “*the separation of a person from the land in which he lives, expatriation, generally due to political motives*”. (Dictionary of the Real Academia Española, 2001).

We use this definition and consider exile as a forced migration due to political reasons. In the subject that we will refer to, it is directly associated to State terrorism.

Exile is frequently lived as the only possible alternative because of imminent danger, risk and/or threat to the physical and emotional integrity of an individual or his family.

In general terms, in our country, exile became an alternative due to different circumstances:

- when there was a repressive situation or a direct and explicit threat to one's personal or family integrity
- when the person, due to his condition of a political-social activist, considered that his situation was one of risk.
- in those cases in which due to their political activism and the risk that they were running, had to leave the country as an exile, supported by a base organization, in order to be able to continue working politically from their exile.
- those infrequent situations where a political prisoner was presented by the repressive forces, the "option" of continuing to be held prisoner, or be released under the condition of leaving the country.

In most cases, going into exile was deeply complex for the whole family group, with different degrees of the comprehension of the facts according to the ages and capacity of elaborating the abrupt change on the part of each member.

We believe that this type of situation, which includes many losses, uprootings and bereavement inherent to different vicissitudes that must be lived, represents in itself, a highly traumatic event. Each one of the exiled persons, individually, as a family and collectively will face and elaborate the different aspects of the experience of exile in very different ways. Previous personality, support systems which they count on, the conditions in which they were received when arriving to the new country, what was lived previously, (among other factors) are factors that will strongly influence the possibility of a greater or lesser elaboration of the situation of exile. If and how it will remain in the psyche of the subjects as traumatic marks or as imprints, in many cases as sad and painful events, yet more linked to the memory of what occurred without any traumatic effectiveness will depend on the way the lived circumstance is processed.

Exile in the first generation

*“People should not be torn away from their land or country,
not by force. People remain hurt and the land remains hurt.
We are born and they cut the umbilical cord.
We are banished and nobody cuts off memory,
language, warmth.
We have to learn to live like the air carnation,
which lives off the air.”*

JUAN GELMAN AND OSVALDO BAYER

Through the clinical work that we have carried out in our institution, we have observed that the people who went into exile and were the first generation of affected people of political repression (former missing-detainees, former political prisoners, persons whose personal integrity was threatened or who considered that they were in danger) lived their exile as a complex situation and make reference to different types of emotions. Among these emotions, there is frequently an intense pain related to the fact of having been uprooted: loss of friends, groups of belonging (political and social), of individual and collective projects, separation of family and social ties, customs, landscapes, daily things.

In some cases, the loss of this family and social environment, similar to a violent rupture from the systems of emotional support, could lead to the appearance of a feeling of desolation, understanding it – as Luis Chiozza and his collaborators state – not in the strict sense of loneliness, but as the painful absence of a significant world: although the person is not alone, the subject is an alien among unknown people in a country which is also unknown.

Those who have suffered exile, in general terms, lived the experience of leaving the country with mixed feelings, where intense pain flowed together with a feeling of relief at having left behind a situation of risk during the time of the dictatorship. Let us remember that this last feeling came about after the anguishing process of deciding to leave, organizing it and then

going through the fearful moment of presenting the required documents to leave Argentina (facing, in many cases, the possibility of being detained at that very moment).

On the other hand, besides innumerable losses that come with exile, those who left had to face the difficulties of installing themselves in a new country – which in many cases had nothing in common with their own culture, which meant that a great effort had to be made of individual and family adaptation to be able to achieve a new social insertion in the new country.

It is important to consider, besides, that part of this population lived, before they went into exile, a time of variable duration in which they had to go through incredibly risky and difficult situations, like living clandestinely, migrating within the country due to reasons of security, besides – in many cases – a state of cutting off contact with others, restricted or infrequent contact with the family group; and in many cases a cutting off from groups of social and political belonging. Many were imprisoned as political prisoners and at the disposal of the National Executive Power (PEN) – with their release – in some cases – subject to the condition of abandoning the country (“the option” that was mentioned previously). All these situations, of a highly traumatic content, not only made the experience of exile even more complex but also that of the later affectation in the first generation of those affected.

Exile in the second generation

“It’s like they condemn you to live life apart from all the people you could have been together with.”

This is the testimony of a young woman who lived 8 years in exile.

The psychic elaboration of exile had to be carried out within the family that was going through situations of bereavement in which all the members were psychologically affected.

In reference to our research in the second generation, the majority of the children of those exiled who we interviewed abandoned the country with both their parents alive, so that the family structure was maintained at the moment of exile, beyond what other changes could have occurred later on.

Presumably, this condition allowed these people the possibility of living in exile within a framework of greater family containment, than other

children of those exiled with one of their parents either a missing-detainee or had been murdered for political motives. In these cases, besides the exile in itself, there were other individual and family problems that had to be confronted.

Without doubt, these aggravating situations would influence the different forms of the elaboration of exile. And although the condition of exile leads to multiple bereavements, it is not the same as having to also process the death or disappearance of one of the parents. The uncertainty of the fate of the missing parent, the feelings of guilt with respect to this or in other cases the pain of the certainty of his/her murder, are some of the subjects that very deeply affect the experience of exile.

Given the complexities of the problems that we have been describing, we will look at those affected of the second generation in three different instances, with specific characteristics: the moment of departure, life in the foreign country and the return to Argentina, since they constitute aspects of the experience which marked the children of those exiled in different ways.

Leaving Argentina

“Then we left, my mother, my sisters. There the story of my life began.”

These are the words of the daughter of exiled parents.

“I feel very bad about not having a place in the world in which to live.”

Testimony of a young adult who lived in exile.

In broader terms, in the second generation of exiled people, we can find two groups, taking into account the age at which they left Argentina. In function of this fact, we will refer to:

- Children who were at kindergarten age at the moment of departure, or that were born abroad.
- Children of school-age at the moment of departure

The children who were very young at the moment of departure have usually lived the moment of return to Argentina more painfully than the departure, which they usually do not have any memory of (or only a very vague recollection).

But the school-aged children felt the departure very much and felt it as a part of them. The young adults belonging to the latter group who were

interviewed expressed that they have an imprint of uprooting in relation to their departure from Argentina. Fundamentally, they refer to the loss or separation from their families: grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, school, house, daily life, typical food, smells, the neighbourhood with its usual views, etc.

Besides, due to the danger in the country previous to their departure, those who were interviewed pointed out the abrupt conditions in which the departure took place, because the children had to participate in the family's dynamics of security and care that were necessary for survival.

We consider that although these situations are different, the abrupt cut produced a violent psychic unsustainment, since according to Kaës, *“the subject lost all the spaces of support in his psychic life which he had had until that moment, constituted by primary and secondary groups and by the institutions to which he belonged.”*

Possibly, the urgency of the decision, as well as the previous complex preparation (frequently from clandestine situations, with false documents or exposure to situations of risk at the moment of getting one's documents) and the disorganizing effect of the social context that affected the parents, influenced the possibility of being able to give sufficient emotional containment to the children. This conjunction of factors, in many cases, made a greater elaboration of the lived situation by the children more difficult.

Family life previous to the exile frequently included a several changes of houses, neighbourhoods, the name of the members of the family group on their documents, including those of the children. To this situation we must also add the fact that the children, on many occasions, had witnessed or had been directly exposed to traumatic situations, such as the raid of their house or the abduction of their parents. In the words of an interviewed young adult: *“During a considerable time a lot of people would come to our house, before leaving or getting out of the country. My grandmother pleaded with my mother, saying she had to leave but my mother did not want to. The situation was unsustainable. At that time the military came into my house; and we helped our parents get rid of books... that in itself was already traumatic. We would hear boots and... until one day (this young adult was only eight years old at the time) they came and stayed three days inside our house. I think one of them was a psychologist. They asked questions and then they left. Then we left, my father, my mother and my sisters; we all went to Paris. One month later, my mother's brother and my cousins left. It*

is then that the story of my life began". Another young adult who was interviewed stated: *"Those months we were very little time at home, we were always in the car. We left in October. Between July and October it was a hell. At any moment it could have been us.* Another interviewed person stated: *"The coup came I don't remember much about those times. In June, 1976 they raided my house in Buenos Aires, at 2 in the morning they rang the bell and it was the Army. They remained in our house about 3 or 4 hours and interrogated my father and mother separately. They showed them photographs asking about Chilean, Argentine and Uruguayan companions. They left at about 5 in the morning and during two or three weeks my parents were followed and controlled by telephone, at my father's work. It was then that my mother, mainly, decided and insisted that we leave the country"*.

As we have mentioned before, these lived experiences of terror, fear, anxiety or persecution have left important psychic marks that were inscribed as traumatic imprints, in a more or less conscious form. According to the degree of elaboration that was able to be carried out, these make their apparition, either as a memory which is not necessarily traumatic or in a symptomatic manner when faced with daily and current issues that reactivate those traumatic experiences and the affections contained in them.

Another difference that we have found among those that were born in exile – or left Argentina as infants – and the children who left at an older age, is that the latter, given the anguishing experiences which they frequently lived prior to leaving, felt that exile was a form of protection when faced with situation of risk that they were living in Argentina.

Life in exile

"There you are from here and here you are from there."

Testimony of an exiled young adult.

Besides the age which they were when they went into exile, we consider that the time in which the children remained in the receiving country is another variable to bear in mind because of the affectionate ties that they might have established and which became stronger as time elapsed in the new country. The stays in these new countries were different among those who we interviewed, and vary between one and twelve years. We have also been able to observe that these differences, in turn, have had diverse emo-

tional and psychological effects in the constitution of the identity of these young adults.

Both variables that we have mentioned (age at exile and length of stay in exile) have affected the manner in which the children lived that experience.

The younger the child was when the family went into exile and the longer the stay in the receiving country, the less the feeling of living in exile since the language, culture and customs of the new country and the groups to which they belonged were incorporated naturally by these children, facts which make an adequate social insertion possible.

A 32-year-old man whose family had lived in exile for six years states: *“When I was a kid I lived everything naturally. The change came when I returned to Argentina, when I realized that what I had been living had been something special. Had we remained here, I suppose we would have been more marked.”*

Another 31-year-old daughter, who went into exile with her family when she was 11 months old and returned when she was nine says: *“In reference to family relationships or friends, the people from Morocco incorporated themselves to us, so then we would celebrate together, we shared everything without any limits of religion. We spent Christmas, New Year together, twelve families would go down to the beach to spend the day together. We were 40 or 50 people”.*

The words of this woman, that emphasize the importance of being a part of an “us”, of a structured functioning from the perspective of what is linking and what is group, allows us to introduce a fundamental issue that contributes to this subject: the need of inherent belonging of human beings.

The situation of exile implies a rupture in the relationships sustained up until that moment: whoever leaves is separated from a part of his family group, from his working ties, from his friends and from his activist companions.

According to Kaës (1976), this situation is lived as: *“the irruption of feelings of helplessness, powerlessness (...) in the social situations of rupture, migration, abrupt modification of social paradigms, situations of natural or social disasters, etc.”*, where *“a flaw is produced in the social systems of support which determines, from the psychic point of view, the appearance of anguish of not being assigned”* (Edelman and Kordon, 2002:110) which brings about a marked feeling of the lack of social belonging.

Faced with the feeling of not belonging, of not being able to find a place that identifies them and contains them, we have observed that

many of those exiled constituted instances of groups where the collective framework functioned as support and containment, allowing to staunch – to a certain degree – the anguishing feeling of the loss of one's place in the world.

A young man who had lived in exile since he was four years old states: *"We had been before in a refugee centre. There were people there from all over the world, they had it pretty good there, that's what I had, I had no other way to compare things. We lived in a small ghetto that was like a small community, we had exiled friends from Argentina and Uruguay."* Another 31-year-old woman, the daughter of exiled parents who lived 7 years in exile, adds: *"We were like the Musketeers: one for all, and all for one, there were no limits among ourselves"*.

For some exiled families this group functioning acquired special characteristics until reaching the point of forming real ghettos or closed communities where, in some cases, although the group functioned as a means of sustainment giving containment and support, this "closed up" way of living made it difficult to integrate themselves into the society of the country that took them in.

The following testimony of a young 31-year-old man illustrates other aspects relevant to the problems of social belonging associated to exile that were fundamentally manifested with respect to the issue of identity: *"Until I was 15 or 16 I was a Norwegian. Argentina was something unknown to me. My eldest sister never managed to grow roots in Norway, but my younger brother did and he is still living there. It is like a lack of identity in reference to territory: there you are from here and here you are from there. You are never content in any of the two countries"*.

Here you can clearly see that the older one was in exile, the harder it was to settle into the new country; unlike what occurred with the younger brother who adopted the country of exile as his own, the middle brother (the person interviewed) expresses ambiguity with respect to the possibility of settling in any of the two countries. This situation shows the complex process of achieving social belonging and of the way in which these young people have been affected in their work concerning identity.

On the other hand, we have also been able to observe that an important number of those interviewed show a positive feeling towards their experience of living in exile. A fundamental point in this sense is that life in the new country was lived in a safe context, without any risks to one's life and within a framework of legality.

These circumstances allowed the parents, in many cases, to acquire certain material and personal achievements, such as starting or continuing with university studies or getting better jobs (remember that before leaving Argentina, in many cases the parents could not hold jobs due to issues of security). These circumstances affected the children in a positive manner as well as in their possibility of consolidating groups of belonging, social relationships and recreational spaces, etc.

Several children of those exiled reflect the following observations in their testimonies: *“In exile my siblings did OK and my parents were able to develop professionally. They didn’t bug us with redoing our studies in accordance to the country or with other similar things, they placed us in schools according to our age. My folks did very well professionally. My dad is a medical doctor so he was given work without any complications”*. Another testimony: *“Exile changed my life positively. I always ask myself what would have become of me if I hadn’t left my neighbourhood. It is quite mobilizing. When I returned, I managed to change my life. I graduated from the University of Buenos Aires. Those who left, the children, although it sounds paradoxical, gained quality of life”*.

In some of those that were interviewed, we saw that they had an idealized vision of their life in exile, as is expressed in the testimony of a 28-year-old young man who lived his childhood outside Argentina. He states: *“Spain must be the best place to live in when you are between 2 and 13 years old. It is an ideal country”*.

In several cases there seems to be an idealized vision of exile through mechanisms of denial, repression, scotoma or disassociation of situations such as the depressive symptoms of the parents, family conflicts or difficulties in the adaptation of the parents to the new country.

The following is a fragment of an interview of a young adult, as an example of what we have just expressed: *“We got out of the airplane with the clothes we were wearing. I think of it now that I myself am a father. We stayed at a shelter for refugees, a hostel with a community kitchen. There were people from Chile, Uruguay...life was lived in community style. Nothing was ever lacking. Rooms, private bathroom. Three months later, the State gave us a house. They sent us to study Dutch. We lived well. Dad worked as a painter, as a pizza maker at a small restaurant. We had contact with other people from Argentina and we are still friends with them. Mom was always unhappy”*. This last sentence about his mother was mentioned as if in passing. We

could think of it as something defensively unlinked to the sad feeling that, undoubtedly, covered the whole family in spite of all the material achievements gained while in exile.

On the other hand, the expression “*Nothing was ever lacking*” shows a certain level of denial towards the numerous losses that accompanied them into exile.

In contraposition to the vision of the children, in our clinical practice with first generation patients, of the same age as the parents of those young adults that were interviewed, it comes forth that for many of them, exile was a difficult and painful time, marked with many losses and a feeling of having been uprooted, and where frequently they had to do work that was very different from the one they had previously been dedicated to. All these factors, surely, emotionally influenced both the personal level and well as the relationships that they managed to establish.

These lived experiences were narrated by a young woman, the daughter of exiled parents: “*My dad suffered a lot in exile, he was not happy there, he always felt that his place was here. He always wanted to be here. Besides, he used to work in a bank, but there he had to sell books in the street, a bit exploited*”.

The return to Argentina

“I always felt that I didn’t belong.”

Testimony of a 30-year-old woman.

As was mentioned before, in the interviews that were carried out, we observed that the greatest traumatic affectation in the group of children of exiled parents is mainly related to the problems of the return to Argentina. To such an extent that we could probably conceptualize it as a sort of “*return syndrome*” or what Mario Benedetti, the Uruguayan poet, called de-exile: “*De-exile is also an act that has a certain violence; it is not simply ending exile, as if nothing had happened; it is returning to something, but it is also uprooting oneself or being uprooted from something, from a territory that at the beginning was foreign but that later, with the passing of years, become part of oneself or was thought of as being a part of oneself, at the same time that that other one, one’s place of origin, became in time stranger and more distant*”. (Contreris, 2006: 44).

We would like to specifically point out two aspects of this: the issue of loss when returning to Argentina and the difficulties of reinsertion in the country.

As regards the losses suffered upon returning to Argentina, the children of exiled parents had to go through multiple bereavements inherent to their uprooting from the country that took them in: the loss of their group of friends, of the language, of a lifestyle, landscapes, food, and customs.

A young man who lived his childhood and adolescence in exile expresses it as follows: *“Only in secondary school did I begin to feel that I belonged here; my brother stayed in Norway; there was a family crisis. I felt I had been robbed, always thinking that I was going to return to Norway”*.

The way in which this was brought about also influenced this process, as well as the conditions and determining factors of the decision to return within the nucleus of the family, (usually they were decisions taken by the parents and to which the children had to adapt). The vital moment that the children were living (frequently the complex stage of adolescence) was also an influencing factor.

From the interviews that we carried out, it turned out that the children who had gone into exile with their parents at a very young age or who were born in exile did not consider themselves as living in exile: for them, the exiled ones were their parents. In turn, this group of children lived the return to Argentina as an experience similar to that of exile, lived as an unknown place to which you arrive for the first time, a country that is relatively foreign and unknown.

A fragment extracted from an open letter from the Children of Exile (*Hijos del Exilio*), written in 2006, illustrates in a very eloquent manner, the point we are trying to make: *“Our parents’ exile later turned into our exile, in our uprooting, because when they returned, we left. We left the place where we had been born or grew up, which for them was a strange place but that for us was our place, and we had to leave it to start a life in their beloved Argentina”*.

We emphasize the possessive adjective, which reflects the point that for the children of those exiled, Argentina was the country of their parents, not their own.

In the same sense, the testimony of this young man, who lived in exile from 2 to 14 years of age, expresses: *“I always thought about how I would have felt in my father’s shoes. It is the opposite, it’s like I was exiled from France. Coming here at 14 was a rupture, Zak! Unconsciously, it may be*

that there are things that are happening to me that are associated to the exile, I think about that now as we are talking about the subject”.

Now, if you consider in the strict sense that exile is a forced migration due to political reasons, we understand that the meaning of exile given by the children upon the return of the family to Argentina denotes a subjective lived experience strongly influenced by the experience of the parents.

We could say that the return to our country in the post-dictatorship years, which meant the end of exile for the parents; meant for the children, strictly speaking, a migration.

Just as when they were going into exile – in the majority of the cases – given the age of the children at the moment of returning to the country, they could not freely choose where they wanted to live. However, surely it is not the same to have to abandon your own country because your life is at risk, than leave a country as part of a family project – motivated by reasons completely different to those of safety. In this sense, we understand that the concept of their own exile, referred to by the children, is based on the fact that many times they had to return to a practically unknown country because of an exclusive decision of their parents, and so, they had to abandon important fragments of their lives and histories linked to the country that took them in.

In several cases, we have observed different ways in which the traumatic situation of exile lived by the parents appeared in the discourse of their children. The following testimonies illustrate this point:

A 38-year-old woman, exiled from when she was 8 until she was 15, with a missing-detainee uncle, says: *“As soon as Alfonsín took office they returned. I remember our years in Madrid as nice years. My sister and I did not want to return to Argentina, we wanted to stay with our uncle and aunt in Europe. Our return came about from one day to another. And here the return was quite traumatic”.* Here we can see a reference to a defensive disassociation with respect to her own experience. The person interviewed does not include herself in this family’s return to Argentina.

A 30-year-old woman, born in exile and whose family returned to Argentina when she was 8, comments: *“I felt the difference when I came back. I lost the containment of the community and here I had to keep silent while I was in school. I could not talk about my past”.* In this case, what is stated alludes to a mechanism of identification with her parents: in reality, the interviewee, in her childhood does not return to Argentina, instead she is going there for the first time.

In these two examples we can see how the traumatic situations lived by the parents leave a mark in the psychism of the children which is evidenced in the memories and words of those interviewed, in the form of particular modes of exclusion or inclusion of themselves in the scene referred to.

Another factor we would like to point out in this group of affected people, is the fact that frequently the return to the country occurred in somewhat precarious conditions, with the feeling of starting all over again; and in many cases, this return had characteristics of living a transitory stage of life.

In this sense, highly conflictive issues with respect to the return to Argentina, were the difficulties that the families encountered until they managed to find a definite place to live. In general, they went through multiple internal changes of house, for example, within the same province or to other provinces – with the consequent changes in schools, and social groups of the children/adolescents. Also, conflicts arose in relation to family loyalties, for instance, where to live when they arrived, if close to the mother's family or the father's, or in a completely different place altogether. These situations had a painful feeling of a lack of belonging, as the testimony of this young woman shows: *"I always felt I didn't belong to the place I was in! It was difficult to integrate myself. I felt unsure. I needed to construct an image so that another person could recognize me. Above all during my adolescence. Three months after our return, we went as 'listeners' to a school in Cordoba and they passed us into the following year. I don't know, it is the effort that the kids make in order to respond. In Buenos Aires, we again had to adapt. We, my sister and I, were always good students. The same happened with all those that were exiled. I heard about cases like this"*.

Beyond personal factors that affected this problem, we consider that the difficulties of becoming rooted that we have observed may be related to the absence of a place that is socially recognized and that operates as a containing agent of the affectation produced by the exile. We can articulate this fact with several other issues.

On the one hand, in the mode in which exile was considered and valued among the political groups, in the sense that it was understood – in many cases – as a possibility of life under more favourable conditions, fundamentally from the security point of view (without taking into account the fact of the difficulties in trying to leave the country).

Within this, the possibilities of personal, working or professional development were also important factors that many of those exiled consid-

ered; unlike those who continued living in Argentina, who frequently found many difficulties regarding these issues.

On the other hand, we also think that the difficulties of returning to Argentina are linked in the sense that within society as a whole, during the first years of constitutional government (a time which coincided with the return of many of those exiled), this was just one more subject that was included the social silence.

In function of what we have stated and taking up again the idea of the social environment as a factor of fundamental importance in the elaboration of situations that are potentially traumatizing, it is possible to think of a kind social unsustainment that was translated into difficulties concerning the setting up of roots and of reinsertion in this group of affected people.

Paradoxically, in many cases the exile was accompanied by a certain social recognition in the countries that received these people, where there were refugee centres, reference groups that were in the same situation that took in and made a place for these people, thus favouring the adaptation to the new country. In this sense, the integration of those who were returning to Argentina was more complex, evidencing the existing conflicts around this subject.

A 30-year-old woman, the daughter of parents who were exiled for six years, expresses it as follows: *“The Christmas season here in Argentina was quite depressing when we returned. In Europe the season was much nicer. We celebrated all the time. We all got together and celebrated things in the European fashion and then in the Argentine manner. Here we are alone and my mother started with the discourse that we had nothing to celebrate”*.

Given the numerous variables that affected the different times of the exile, in many cases it was possible to find an intense feeling of ambivalence in the children of those exiled with respect to becoming rooted in Argentina. This was manifested on occasions, as a conflict of loyalties between the country that took them in – where they had lived several years of their childhood – and the country to which they were arriving for the first time. With the passing of time, this was manifested several times in the difficulty of becoming rooted or definitively establishing oneself in one of the two countries.

We can infer from all this that a strong feeling of belonging to the country that took them in and to their social and cultural characteristics have become a part of the identity of these children and young adults and have

frequently posed conflictive and ambivalent situations after their return, as we can clearly see in the following words of a son of exiled parents: *“Being here does not make me feel comfortable, I have never felt Argentine... The times that I left, I left very angry; of arriving somewhere and saying I was never going to return. After a time I started to feel nostalgia. I leave angry, but then I miss things too much”*.

With respect to this issue, the open letter from the Children of those Exiled stated the following: *“We felt that were no longer the ‘strange person’ – the term we lived with for years. We met others who had gone through the same experience, who had a conflict with it. Conflicts dealing with the double identity that we all have, Argentina and the countries that took us in, where we grew up and/or were born; the dual identity that made it difficult for us to settle down. Some of us, after a long time, were able to solve this fundamental conflict; while others are constantly searching for a place of belonging where to continue construing their lives”*.

In this fragment we can see how the establishment of bonds between the children of exiled parents allows these young adults so many years later (30 years), to elaborate this mark that has identified them.

About the children of former political prisoners

On political imprisonment

Along history, the imprisonment of political dissidents has been one of the most common forms of repression used by hegemonic power. And in this sense, Argentina has been no exception.

In the last two years of constitutional government, while the coup was being conceived and the policy of annihilation of the social, popular and political activists was being institutionalized, this mode of repression had already been installed and it intensified continuously so as to continue during the military dictatorship that took over in 1976.

In a great number of cases it was about prolonged periods of time in prison (even before the beginning of the dictatorship until the first post-dictatorship constitutional government of 1983). In these cases, from the very beginning, detention had the same characteristics as political imprisonment.

As from 1976 there was a great qualitative leap in the repressive policy: State terrorism was installed with the systematic and forced disappearance of people as the main repressive instrument. Basically, the mode was of

an abduction during a clandestine operation; those abducted remained as missing-detainees for a period of time – which was variable from case to case – and in some cases, they were later declared political prisoners at the disposition of the PEN (National Executive Power), a condition shared with those who had been taken prisoner before the military coup.

This last piece of information is not something minor, since it implied that the Executive Power could take the measures that were deemed adequate or functional for their purposes against the prisoners. For example, transfer them to other prisons inside the country, arbitrarily rule on the frequency and manner of the visits, moment and condition of release and in a few cases, present the detained person with the option of being released under the condition of leaving the country.

In many cases the prisoners were subjected to the “Ley de Fugas” or extrajudicial execution during their transfers, which meant that an escape was simulated where the prisoner was killed, thus covering up his murder under a legal precept.

Children of former political prisoners

With respect to the people whom we interviewed, as a general characteristic, the children of political prisoners were of a young age when their parents were detained and they were separated from them during the early stages of their lives. On the other hand, in all the cases, their parents remained as political prisoners for a long time (in some cases up to 8 or 9 years). That is to say, they were young and went through a long absence of their father or mother or both during their first or second childhood, moments when the work of identity is developing constantly.

To these facts we must add the complex situation that the families/relatives, who took on the responsibility of bringing up the children, were going through, which acquired different configurations. For instance, we can mention families where both parents had been taken as prisoners for political reasons; others had one parent in prison and the other parent was either missing or had been killed; or a parent in prison and the other living in clandestine conditions. These were some of the combinations of traumatic affectation that the children of political prisoners suffered, and which gave rise to modifications in the composition of the family and the way in which it functioned.

An aggravating situation to consider in this change of family structure

was the situation in which, for different motives, siblings had to be separated and were brought up by different family members: grandparents, uncles and aunts, etc. The most extreme case of this being, that in which one of the children was abducted or was in prison with the mother.

All the mentioned situations show the complex situations of life both of the children as well as of the family group as daily life was affected by feelings of anguish, fear, concern, uncertainty, emotional instability or depressive states in adults and children. This, of course, has left marks in the psychism of the children of the political prisoners.

Within this group, we can specifically mention three situations which, for us, were the most difficult to deal with from the possibility of elaboration, evidencing that some of them still appear currently in the lives of the young adults in the form of symptoms or traumatic memories. These three moments are: the visits to the jails, how the children lived the fact of having their father/mother in prison and the situation or the process of the return of their parent to the home.

Within the group of children of political prisoners, besides the subgroup mentioned before (children who were very young at the moment their parent/s were detained), we must consider those who were born after their parents were released. In this last case, the incidence of what had happened to their parents in times of political repression will affect the children according to the modality of transmission that was carried out by the parents, as well as the fantasy constituted in the psyche of each one of them, since they did not live the situation of the absence of their parents in a personal manner.

Visits to the jails/prisons

“In 1976 in a jail known as ‘Freedom’.

The Uruguayan political prisoners cannot speak without permission, cannot whistle, smile, sing, walk quickly nor greet another prisoner.

They cannot either draw or receive drawings of pregnant women, couples, butterflies, stars or birds.

Didaskó Pérez, school teacher, who was tortured and imprisoned for ‘having ideological ideas’, one Sunday is visited by his five-year-old daughter Milay. She has brought him a drawing with birds.

The censors tear it up at the entrance of the jail.

The following Sunday, Milay brings him a drawing of some trees.

*Trees are not forbidden so that she can take him the picture.
Didaskó praises her work and asks about the small coloured circles
that appear in the trees, many small circles that are among the branches:
Are they oranges? What fruit are they?
The little girls tells him to hush.
Sshhh! – and secretly she explains to him – Silly! Don't you see that
they are eyes? The eyes of the birds that I secretly brought to you.
Pájaros Prohibidos, by EDUARDO GALEANO*

In the group of the interviewed children, the visits that they made to their parents in prison when they were very young acquired a predominant place in their memory either as a traumatic lived experience or mark. This situation was described by almost all the young adults, as a moment of great pain and anguish due to the conditions in the jail that the parents were living in, to the search (frisking) they were subjected to, although they were children, before entering and to the characteristics of the visits, since in many cases personal contact was not allowed. This meant that they could only see their parent through a glass window, with the limitation of physical and emotional contact that this brings about.

A 34-year-old man, whose father had been detained when he was a year old and remained in prison for seven years, talks about his experience: “*Besides, what it all meant to go into the jail, the searches (frisking). I still remember the cold, when you had to walk to the building or somebody touching you to see if you had anything on you. In the first prison, there were still physical visits, we could take some pastries and mate (a type of tea). Later he was taken to another prison where from then on I could only see him through a glass window – never again did we have physical contact – I only was able to see him again without the glass window between us when I was six or seven years old, and that was yet in another prison.*”

Also, the moment of saying goodbye at the end of the visit was a very difficult and sad situation for the children, since it implied a separation after a fleeting moment together, with the sadness of knowing that their father/mother would remain locked up in the prison.

A 32-year-old woman remembers: “*My grandparents took us to see my father. He wasn't among the common prisoners, he was with the political prisoners. Up until the coup, we would see him in different rooms with long benches. After the coup, there were no more 'contact' visits*

so we could only see him through a glass with small holes in it. I didn't like to go at all. I remember very well some smells, such as the frying of some pastries, or whatever. When they searched us, they made us take off our shoes and touched us all over our body They told me that at the beginning they would even take off my diaper to check. My father would beg me to go visit him (in his letters), I still have a whole bunch of those letters. I remember that at the moment of leaving the jail, sometimes I would look behind me and I would see my father different, like he was very old, I don't know, as if he were very fragile and that made me very sad to leave him inside there, and alone...".

The anguish associated to the visits in some cases was so great for the children and sometimes even for the adults that accompanied them (partner, grandparents, brothers, sisters, etc.), that sometimes the relatives decided not to take the children so as not to expose them to the painful feelings that this situation brought about.

Besides, to this complex situation of the visits to the jails, in many cases the prisoners were transferred to other prisons which were very far away from the place of family residence (Rawson, Azul), making a visit much more difficult. This, in turn, also affected the relationship between the child and the imprisoned mother/father.

The experience of the visits to the imprisoned father frequently appears in the interviews through corporal sensations and sensorial memories.

A young man whose father continues to be missing and whose mother was imprisoned for 8 years: *"What I do remember: a very shiny door, and after a patio in the brigade... a wall, a small patio with a gate through which some women would give us mate cocido (a type of tea) and bread".*

The daughter of a man who was imprisoned for 8 years says: *"I remember the darkness of the long hall which we had to walk through, in single file, and that gave me a sensation that I was not able to breathe".*

This fluidity of sensorial registers could be related to the young age of the children at that moment, a fact which made processing through words difficult, thus leaving the painful memory clotted, appearing in the form of corporal sensations.

Once more we would like to point out that these difficult experiences of visiting their parents in jail did not necessarily take on a traumatic character. In those cases where these lived experiences remained in the psychic apparatus as traumatic marks, we have observed the later irruption of symptoms that prove this fact. An example of this would be the testimony

of a young woman, who at twenty, begins to suffer panic attacks and anguish crises in closed places and where she must wait and stand in a line; for instance on escalators, halls at the university. In this case, the situation directly alluded to the traumatic experiences that she had lived as a child when she visited her father in prison.

Being the child of an imprisoned mother or father

I don't know if this is ever going to heal or not.
Testimony of a son of an imprisoned father.

In relation to how the children lived within their family, social and school life the fact of having their father or mother imprisoned, we have observed that this situation presented different levels of conflict with the “outside”.

Frequently they felt the need to conceal this fact because they felt – for example – feelings of shame when confronted with their peers which later on, in certain cases, led to social withdrawal.

One of the people interviewed said: *“I was ashamed to say that my father was in prison. I didn't know how to tell my classmates that my father was in prison but not because he was a thief. I understood that very well. In first or second grade they asked us to draw our fathers at work and I drew my father working in a brick factory, because the prisoners where my father was made bricks. There was a kid who lived around the block from me that threatened to tell the whole neighbourhood that my father was in prison. He continued saying so for two years. When I was an adolescent, I told everyone that my father was a toolmaker. When I should have made my Identity Document at school, my mother told me not to so I wouldn't have to explain the situation of my father. I always had to disguise things and that was a heavy burden for me. I was ashamed I could not say what my father worked as”.*

In this testimony we can clearly see the feelings that this child went through, which included fear of being judged and excluded by his peers, with the consequent need to invent something socially acceptable, although untrue. The feelings of loneliness and the weight of the secret that hung over this child are expressed very vividly in this testimony.

In other cases, the painful experience of having their father in prison was not able to be processed or was processed partially, giving the impres-

sion that in the present it continues to be an open wound, even in adult life, and continues to produce effects.

The son of a father who was in prison seven years states: *“I have a curtain, I don’t want to know anything about it. I am in denial over everything. I don’t want to get involved in anything. When I travel to the interior of the country or abroad, I get scared that when I return my children will no longer be at home. I repeatedly dream that someone is kicking the door and that they take something, and I think it is my children. I always associated my father’s illness with the torture he went through. I don’t know if this is ever going to heal or not”*.

Unlike what has been expressed in the previous examples, a few of those that were interviewed said that they lived the experience of their parents in prison as something painful yet natural, something that could occur in the repressive context of the times. We suppose that in those families where this occurred, the subject of the imprisoned parent was something that was talked about, integrated into family life and possible of being shared with other children within the extra-family group of belonging.

Another testimony: *“My mother was 8 years in prison. For me, my childhood was totally normal. My classmates went to school 5 days a week. I didn’t, I went 4 days and on Friday I would go to visit my mother in jail. It was also normal for my classmates. At the end of the dictatorship, the school that I attended had some contact with those that were imprisoned. In October, 1983, when I was twelve, my mother was released from prison and I took her to my school so that everyone could meet her”*.

From the above examples we can observe how in the same situation, the imprisonment of the parents which undoubtedly leaves a relevant identifying mark, can be lived as something painful yet normal in one case, while in others it is lived as painful but more linked to something traumatic which, even in the present, is re-updated through symptoms, dreams, fears.

The following testimony is of a 33 year-old man whose father was in prison for 7 years. The complete family had gone into exile for a year: *“I generated a terrible hatred towards the military. Here, I have done some really crazy things with the police, of stopping and wanting to run them over with the car. I treat them very badly. Even today I don’t give anybody my Identity Number. I just don’t. I give them instead my driver’s licence number. Because in order to visit my father we had to leave everything. I still remember the cold, when we had to walk*

to the prison or when someone touched you to see if you were hiding something”.

As in all the groups of children that underwent psychoanalysis, the problems of the management of the information about what was happening to their parents is present in the children of those who were imprisoned.

There have also been cases in which the adults in charge of the children, for different reasons, concealed the fact that their parent was in prison.

A young adult whose father had been in prison for several years states: *“Until I was five years old I was told that my father was in a school. Then I started to ask questions, I said that none of the fathers of my friends slept in a school. They never gave us a true or clear answer. I feel that we just started to realize the truth little by little”.*

In relation to the subject of being a child with a father in prison, in several interviews the subjective lived experience of going through a family reality that was very different from that of other people appears. It is manifested by a young man in the following manner: *“I used to think, why can’t we have a normal family?”.*

Given the importance which children and adolescents usually place on the fact of being or feeling similar to their peers, within the possibility of social belonging, this group of children found themselves partially affected in this sense. For many of them, having their father in prison implied a feeling of “strangeness” in relation to their peers.

We must also add to this aspect, the difficulty of being part of a family group that was living outside the social and cultural family models of those times. These situations were frequently lived by the children with feelings of *strangeness* or incongruency, and referred to as a feeling of abnormality.

This delayed desire of normality is manifested in several statements with expressions such as *“I want my children to have the most normal family possible”.*

In some cases, the affectation of the children when faced with the imprisonment of their parents took on psychosomatic characteristics. Here are some testimonies:

A young man who was interviewed says: *“I broke my arms a lot, so I couldn’t enter the jail because I might have been hiding something in the cast”.*

A young woman states: *“I always, since I was young, somatized with gynecological issues, repeated urinary infections, what was gynecological was very symbolic. I was always calling for attention when I was*

small, I was always 'sick' but I wanted to say: Hey, here I am! I was always allergic".

Another young adult, the daughter an imprisoned father expresses: *"I had everything: taquicardia when I was six years old. A doctor diagnosed that I had psychosomatic allergic rhinitis; I suffered enuresis until my father was released from prison and after that panic and anxiety attacks".*

On the other hand, in some of those who were interviewed we noticed the persistence of feelings of pain and anger into adult life because of the father's absence, questioning the choice of activism of the parent as this was considered what was responsible for the father's absence. To illustrate this point, we will cite the testimony of a young adult whose father was imprisoned for several years: *"The difference is that as a father I am always present, but my father never was. It was my father's fault, he chose it. I always say a phrase to my son which I like: 'Dad will always be with you' or 'I love you very much'. I will say these things about twenty times a year, many times. Perhaps too many but I like to point it out, I think it is important. I want him to feel confident, not to feel the same things I felt. I only had my mother, that is why I have unconditional love for her".*

Former political prisoners: The return of the father/mother to family life

This part presents some aspects that are shared among those parents that were released after having been legally recognized as prisoners as well others who were released after having been in the condition of a missing-detainee (that is to say, a clandestine prisoner).

Beyond the important differences that this fact brings about, the return of the father or mother to the family must be conceived as a process and not as a unique moment of encounter, constituting, thus, a complex process.

We must bear in mind that whoever comes back from having lived an experience in prison or in a concentration camp, is in most cases a very different person from what he/she was. This person had to live through very painful moments, many times through situations on the limit. He has been separated from those he loves most for a longtime, he has not been carrying out his paternal role in everyday life, although there were cases in which the important decisions with respect to the children were taken by the parents that were in prison.

So that the encounter among parents and children, beyond what is emotional, implied a re-knowledge, a learning process, for both parents and children, that was not exempt from difficulties.

In this sense, the return to family life can mean both for the children as for the parents, the loss of certain illusions that were sustained about the encounter.

In general, the children constructed an idealized image of the mother/father during the long period of absence and many times the return confronted them with a very different reality from that which was desired: the family member comes back with scars of the traumatic situations that he has gone through.

The following testimonies reveal the different family experiences and difficulties with respect to the parental role that arose when the parent who had been imprisoned returned:

A young adult of parents who are former political prisoners states: *“Mother was released from one day to another, thinking that when she got out they were going to kill her. She went to look for us. We were living with our father’s mother, and there was something very complicated about her: it was about who of the two was my mother. Even today my grandmother says ‘my children-grandchildren’ and that really bugs me, because there is no possible confusion between a grandchild and a child, you are either a grandchild or a child”*. In this case, the maternal role was performed by the grandmother during the years that the mother was in prison and it was a difficult place for the mother to recuperate after she was released, so this generates a situation of rivalry between both of them that deeply marked the life of this daughter.

Another son of a mother who was in prison tells a different story: *“According to my mother, she had left it very clear that, even though she was in prison, she would continue to raise me from prison, so that she made all the decisions. My grandparents always respected her will”*.

Between these two modalities of family and relationship structure, in some manner antagonistic, the greatest part of the vicissitudes associated to parental functions were developed in the families of those affected.

On the other hand, we have seen during several interviews a type of rationalization and over adaptation that justifies the attitudes and behaviours of the parents when they came into contact with their children again. These are interpreted as a consequence of the traumatic situations inherent to their life in prison.

These defensive mechanisms possibly allowed some children to develop new ways of relationships with their parents when confronted with the fall of the idealized paternal/maternal image.

The daughter of an imprisoned father expresses: *“My father was eight years in prison, we had contact through letters. In those years, I moved house 14 times. When my father was about to be released in 1982, we went to pick him up with my grandmother, my brother, my mom and me. He came out, but we had to wait for him rather far away; imagine how you want to hug him, but they make you stand further away, to wait for him at a certain distance. My father was released, but he was on parole, I think. He had had all the paperwork done for going to Spain, so he left pretty soon. My grandmother died in 1983. My dad came for the funeral, with a very European style, with long hair – nothing to do with his short hair and glasses of before. He is not the one of the letters or of my childhood either. It cost him a lot, from outside, to have a father-daughter relationship”*.

We have observed that both in the children of the former missing-detainees and the children of former political prisoners, talking with their parents about what happened during their imprisonment constitutes a situation that is not exempt from problems: fears, uncertainty about the convenience of asking or not asking, difficulty or impossibility of answering on the part of the parents – are just some of the obstacles that this group also had to go through.

The following testimony belongs to a young woman whose parents had been imprisoned: *“Our parents always talked to us about the subject, it was something talked about. The two of them talked about it, it is a construction that I now make My father talked about it, my mother reserved something which she did not want to mention I never asked them if they had been tortured, I supposed they had been, but I didn’t ask A year ago my sister asked my mother and she responded that she didn’t want to talk about it”*.

Final reflections

This research has been able to manifest some of the characteristics, singularities, modalities that the second generation acquired when processing the traumatic situations produced by State terrorism.

The elaboration of traumatic events of such a magnitude necessarily im-

plies an individual dimension and another collective one that infect each other and make themselves mutually possible, functioning in a simultaneous manner. This complex and necessary processing, although possessing shared aspects among the different groups of those affected, showed specific issues in each one of them, as regards the manner and time required for individual and collective elaboration.

A common denominator to all the groups was that the children had to overcome everyday conditions of life which implied that violent and incomprehensible circumstances were going to come forth.

And although in all the groups of interviewed people we found marks of the lived traumatic situation, the most relevant aspects of these events are different in each one of them.

In the children of those exiled, the uprooting and the losses with respect to territory and culture was a determining weight, meaning that they went through a bereavement that affected the conformation of their identity. It has been frequent, therefore, to have heard of the experience of not belonging to any place, or in the best of cases, to have a mixed identity, that can be summarized in one word that expresses both, for example “*ArgenMex*” (for Argentine-Mexican)”.

In the children of former political prisoners the effects of having been long periods of their childhood under the care of substitute mothers and/or fathers, who themselves were affected just like the children, by the terror, the separation of their loved ones and the absence of a fluid and daily contact with them, start to appear.

Specifically, in the children of the former prisoners who visited their parents in jail, the traumatic mark left by these visits is very noticeable, due to the humiliating and abusive physical checks that they had to go through to enter the jails as well as to the anguishing characteristics of the meeting with their parents.

In the second generation we must bear in mind the dimension of the historic time in its relation to the social processing of what is traumatic which, in a non-linear manner with regard to periods and intensities, has been giving place to different forms of affectation. This can be observed, for example, in the installation of problems in the children of those exiled in the social scene three decades after the beginning of the dictatorship.

An expression of the emotional impact in the children of those directly affected are those psychic inscriptions that, just like real milestones in the personal history of these young adults, started to affect the structure both in

their current lives as in their future projects.

We have developed – in this direction – the idea of identifying marks, understood as those marks of significant lived experiences that will function as a mode of organizers of important parts of the life of the subject. These imprints, which in our research correspond to the many situations which affected the second generation, could have, depending on the elaboration reached, a traumatic character or not.

The greater the possibility of elaboration of the traumatic situations, the more different modalities these marks will take on. Thus, they will be able to be expressed as memories, feelings, learned experiences or be present at the moment of personal choices (work, professional, couple) or in sublimatory acts (for example, artistic and cultural productions).

In the case that these marks remain as non-elaborated remains, and for this reason, closer to what is traumatic, they will return as emotional symptoms, psycho-somatic illnesses or organic disorders.

Some of the frequently observed marks are the following:

- The incidence of the family discourse, markedly affected by traumatic stories.
- The functioning of the family at the service of silencing what occurred (an imposition which is more or less explicit of a mandate of silence).
- The feeling of “being different to everybody else”, with the consequent difficulty of the integration into certain groups for fear of remaining isolated, judged, not understood. Thus the anguish of not belonging coexists with the fear of being exposed to the looks of others, which on some occasions takes on a persecutory tone.
- The intense necessity present in many children of forming part of something “normal” in reference to their mode of life and as an ideal for their own children, clearly marking a difference with their own personal history.
- The presence, in many children of the missing-detainees, of strong super-ego mandates linked to the idealization of the life of their parents, to fundamentally continue with their projects and ideals while at the same time confronting difficulties to structure their own modes of doing and thinking.

The marks left in the social body by the traumatic situations of the dictatorship make their symptomatic appearance in the present, when faced with situations that re-install that which has not yet been able to be elaborated within the public scene. This would be the case of events that put the existing impunity in matters of human rights violations at the forefront, which operates as a factor of re-traumatization, affecting the imprints left by the primary traumatic events, thus making the work of elaboration even more complex.

It is important to point out the differences between these events, which act as a sort of second traumatic stimulus given the re-updating of past events within the framework of the ongoing impunity (disappearance of the witness Julio López, social and political crisis of 2001, threats to witnesses of the trials against the repressors, among others), from those other situations that the children go through during their lives (for instance, the absence of the missing relative in important moments of their lives) which can trigger painful affectionate situations contained in the traumatic imprints, bringing about an intense mobilization on the emotional plane, but as they do not constitute real recreations of past history, they do not present re-traumatizing characteristics.

The affectation produced by State terrorism not only produced effects at the individual level, it also had important consequences in the whole of the social body, affecting the production of subjectivity. It is thus that its analysis also allows us to comprehend and intervene on subjects that are more or less manifest in the subjective development of the young generations. Feelings and lived experiences of skepticism and uncertainty, fear of participating in the struggle for social and political vindications, feelings of impotence are also all consequences of the regime of imposed terror.

On the contrary, it is possible to affirm that social practice in its multiple forms produces effects of support for the individual psyche, it generates a counter-hegemonic social discourse and favours the mobilization of de-alienating forces as well as constructs social representations in the order of what is trans-subjective and what is trans-generational, determining in this manner, the production of new subjectivities.

The young adults inexorably question the current social order, sometimes in a silent manner and other times in a more spectacular manner: in rebellious disobedience you can hear their voices in the movements of the unemployed, of the garbage-scavengers, of human rights, of peasants, of the workers and of students movements. Because in our country, as in most of

our Latin America, the achievement of objectives that our preceding generations fought so much for is still pending.

From this perspective, the demand for justice is essential as the only possibility of restoring, in the real order and in the symbolic one, some level of reparation of the lived traumatic situations on the individual and social level.

From EATIP, we actively support the demand for truth and justice as the inevitable condition for individual and collective reparation of the traumatic imprints produced by State terrorism, as well as for the constitution of the subjectivities where impunity is not a value of reference and, finally, for the construction of collective memory.

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IMPLICATIONS

Psychoanalytical practice within a context of terror⁵¹

Lia Ricón

In times of political repression, our practice went through many difficulties. Unfortunately, I think that we just realized this really and in detail, when we came out of the situation of terror. The things that we were able to observe of the perturbations were especially manifested in four areas, in relation to:

1. The objective of the psychoanalytical process, this is self-knowledge.
2. The loss or deterioration of the instruments of the technique that allows the development of the process.
3. The results, and here I especially refer to the elaboration of bereavement.
4. A type of repression or oblivion of the facts both in the person analyzed as in the analyst.

1.

The psychoanalytical process aims towards self-knowledge and requires that the person who is going to experiment it has decided rationally to reach this objective.

Within a situation of terror, it is inevitable for the magic thought that hinders the desire for self-knowledge to appear. The saying that “the walls can hear” illustrates the existence of this mood in which the denial of the dangers is essential for continuing with daily life. Multiple observations show this magic thought in those who are suffering under the pressure of terror produced by political repression. For example, educated and rational people, who have university degrees, and are not religious, go to soothsayers, witches and “psychic” people in order to obtain information about the

⁵¹ This work was presented at the International Psychoanalytical Congress which was held in Chicago in July, 2009. This clarification is valid, since, in my opinion, all our practice as psychotherapists was affected. The precisions of this work in reference to psychoanalytical technique do not exclude what we could say about all our work as psychotherapists.

whereabouts of the missing relative. In this manner, the fantasy of prophecy or of the knowledge of intimacy through what is said to a psychoanalyst does not make a rational decision of self-knowledge feasible. This especially affects the beginning of the practice.

2.

The second problem mentioned is that we suffer a loss or a deterioration of the instruments which are necessary for our practice.

The general situation of society can be described saying that the constitutional guarantees needed for the control of crime have disappeared or have become so weak that they cannot be used. This meant that if we were listening to how the police or the Armed Forces kidnapped someone, we had no possibility of trying to help this person, since the area in which in which things were taking place (for example, the army) was a “liberated zone” – or area in which anything could happen and was allowed – for the police. Legal resources such as the *habeas corpus* disappeared in times of what we call “State terrorism”. No consideration was given to this resource. In this circumstance, these representatives of maternal and paternal imagos that the community establishes for adults, characterized by the police and the law, disappear and we cannot use the “as if” in circumstances in which being persecuted could be interpreted in the transference.

It is in this manner how external reality could appear in such a manner that it disqualified intervention. An example in my practice is having become surprised in the middle of an interpretation of this type, while standing next to a window near the person being analyzed, trying to figure out what had happened after a bomb explosion broke all the windows of the neighbourhood. Although the interpretation would have been, and I think it was, adequate, it is not easy to sustain all the implications.

Although a bomb did not explode every day, the possibility was in the social imaginary. And just like the number of those that disappeared is not important, (which can be discussed with political purposes), what is important is the existence of a society in which that figure is possible. Here I wish to open a parenthesis to clarify that the denomination of “missing people” was coined by the repressors. In reality, this is a catachresis⁵²; they are

52 Catachresis: trope which consists in giving a transferential sense to a word so as to designate something which does not have a special name. For example: the blade of a sword. In our case, the name “desaparecidos” or “missing” was given by the dictatorship in order to avoid the more correct term of “ocultados” or “hidden”.

concealed , not missing. It wasn't due to a boat sinking or an earthquake, but to an organized plan. In this climate, the instruments of our psychoanalytical practice that were especially affected were:

1. For the patient:
 - Free association
2. For the analyst:
 - Neutrality
 - Possibility of distinguishing reality from fantasy in the counter-transference
 - Development of theoretical thinking

Free association was strongly hindered. Repression acted without being able to attribute only neurotic conflicts to it, but also because of the fear to think or give information that meant a risk. One must remember that there were detentions because somebody's name was found in more than three address books.

For the analyst, neutrality was seriously compromised. If we remained completely neutral, the person analyzed could imagine that we were on the side of the repressors; and if we let them know of our position, it was more difficult to critically attack conflicts related to activism.

In my practice, I analyzed a young woman that had had two boyfriends that were missing-detainees. She had seen one fall off a roof after being shot and the other she had had to go to the morgue to recognize the body which was totally disfigured by burns. I listened to the horrible account that the woman was telling me in a neutral tone, as if she were not talking about somebody else, but rather of another time and another species. The signs I pointed out were not successful and I felt impotent in trying to find an expression of her affections. Without wanting to, I started crying and the young woman asked me somewhat surprised: "*Are you crying?*" And I answered: "*If you don't cry with what you are telling me, someone has to cry*". The effect of this exchange was abrupt. What came forth was that, even though she had accepted me as her analyst, there was an important degree of distrust with respect to my position when faced with what she had suffered. Clarifying this situation also served to be able to touch other conflicts that were strongly repressed, especially her resentment towards her bosses in the guerilla network, because she had not felt that they were taking care of her and she mentioned the situation of decompensation of a

companion, who from what I could understand was very phobic and had a panic crisis for not being to continue using her counter-phobic resources.

Another perturbation in relation to the instruments was the possibility of discriminating between reality and fantasy in *counter-transferential* feelings. This can be illustrated with the perturbation that was produced in a working group when there was the suspicion that a small boy could be the child of a missing-detainee, and that those who took him to treatment were not his real parents. This only occurs in a society where there are “missing people”. Anguish invades the circuit and can then become a double paranoid circuit: on the one hand, the fantasy to cover up the “appropriator”; and on the other hand, the fantasy of being a victim of the vengeance on the part of this false adoptive father.

The obstacle to the development of *theoretical thought* is clearly illustrated with the situation of a colleague that worked as a group therapist, who decided during the dictatorship that these types of treatments were not efficient. Let us remember that there were abductions of entire groups and group therapists. When the danger was over, she rethought the subject and realized that her decision had been strongly influenced by fear, by the clear awareness of the inherent danger to group meetings.

3.

With respect to the results, we have greatly discussed if the characteristics of the elaboration of bereavement for the disappearance of people contains aspects that make it different from other types of bereavement.

In my experience, the elaboration of some types of bereavement is disturbed, because as one cannot recathect the loss, something occurs which can be compared to a keloid scar: something that is permanently sensitized and painful. The reasons that I could find in the analysis that I remember is that this recathectization exists in relation to the wound that cannot heal, because there is a permanently painful stimulus in those that suffered the losses. On the one side, the non-appearance of the bodies does not give certainty of death. Each time that the news of a disappearance without the recovery of the body was repeated, the relatives went through an acuteness of symptoms, such as: insomnia, headaches, anhedonia, abulia, etc. We understand that torture continues to operate in the relatives, particularly since it is not a natural disaster or an accident. There was no protective paternal imago that was searching for the bodies. When the president of Italy, Sandro Pertini came to Argentina, the Mother insisted with this request using

expressions that were clearly identifying this President with the paternal imago.

Other evidence is that the funeral rites are carried out by the relatives only when the body appears. There was also an aggravating event when death certificates were signed although there was no proof of death, only a supposition.

An example which can illustrate the type of scar I mention, is that which appeared when a patient came for a control because he was living his situation like a wound that had healed over a hole "*like an empty ball in the stomach of a cat*". The analyst insisted with the known interpretations, which the analyzed person accepted, yet understood that this hole contained ghosts and that the ghosts were the scenes of horror that the patient had seen and suffered and did not think could be erased, because she would live it as a betrayal towards all those who had suffered torture and death.

4.

In relation to the repression or oblivion of some events both on the part of the analysts and on the part of the patients. To talk about repression or oblivion alludes to a discussion between analysts and the neuro-scientists. We do not have sufficient elements to assure that some facts were forgotten because the stress hormones destroyed structures, especially those of the hippocampus, and there is no possibility of remembering.

An illustrative example comes from my own practice. When I was the Chief of the Psychiatric Service of a general hospital, I couldn't remember having offered to control the work of a young therapist and even admit a patient of hers that was a suicide risk (both were activists). She could not find anyone to help her and came to me. When this therapist publicly thanked me, I thought there was a mistake, that I was confused, and when she gave me details of the event, I only remembered the image of her yellow skirt when we had been talking. This example illustrates the difficulties for free association and also for the floating attention of the analyst.

Another example is what we lived through when we had a reflection group in APA⁵³, on the consequences of political repression, which I myself coordinated. We all felt a great cathartic relief. I especially remember having been able to narrate that I had heard, from my balcony, someone who was

53 Argentine Association of Psychoanalysis (APA - Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina).

being taken away shout his telephone number and that I quickly dialed and spoke to the person who answered. I had totally forgotten that event and when I spoke of it, the memory came back with the number nine that must have been part of the telephone number that the abducted person shouted.

In summary, an analyst with fear cannot have theoretical clarity, he cannot think, he cannot remember, he has a disqualification which, as I pointed out at the beginning, only came forth once the terror was over. We need constitutional guarantees in order to be able to exercise our practice in an adequate manner.

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Ethics and mental health

Daniel Kersner

To talk of ethics and mental health currently is similar to one of those tasks which the filmmakers make of species in danger of extinction. However, or perhaps because of this, I think that today it is necessary to talk about these subjects, that are so undervalued in these times of neoliberal globalized pragmatism. I would like to refer to some examples which we lived through as a therapeutic team in the assistance to those affected by State terrorism and also as a therapist, in general.

Some years ago, a 17-year old girl, whom we shall call Susana, came to consult our team. She had been adopted and was under the idea that she was the daughter of missing-detainee parents. We interviewed the girl, who was in treatment for a while, and also her parents. The versions that they gave us of her adoption were indirectly related to some military person. But what really called our attention was that she *wanted* to be the daughter of missing-detainee parents: the idea of having been wanted and loved by her parents, and that that bond had been interrupted forcefully and against the will of the parents, was much more gratifying than that of having been given in adoption and/or abandoned by her biological parents.

In this case, Susana's adoptive parents participated in several interviews and although they were not overly keen with respect to the search for her biological parents, they did nothing to hinder it either, at least not in an evident manner. The parents also authorized psychological treatment for Susana. Had this not occurred, there would have been an ethical conflict. There could also have been a problem of pertinence for the therapeutic group in relation to the ethical imperative of collaborating and/or participating in the search for Susana's identity of origin or of other similar cases, if the parents had not supported the institution. And probably a legal problem too, as she was a minor. Here I would like to state a first provisional conclusion: *what is legal and what is ethical do not always coincide, and sometimes may greatly differ.*

It is incredible how the subject of the robbed children (some 500), which

has been a part of the booty of war, puts the whole institution of adoption into question, an institution which is in itself very complex and which in our country also presents a strong feature of class: the children given in adoption belong, in most cases, to poor people or homes. At the same time that Susana was seeking consultation, the girlfriend of a patient of mine – also an adopted daughter – thought that she might be the daughter of missing-detainee parents. Her case did not present any suspicion at all that this could be possible. However, the doubt, the question – ethical question – , was stated. Why is it an ethical question? Because it has to do with the truth, and ethics deals with values united to the truth, if not, it is not ethics.

We can debate about the consequences of this statement. In principle, because to suppose that the truth exists is also to state that an objective reality exists, something that seems to be rather old-fashioned. This does not mean that quickly and without much work we will be able to objectivize that reality. It does mean that working carefully we will be able to discover it, we can get closer to reality and to the truths enclosed in it, in successive approximations. But in any case, our difficulties do not put into doubt the existence of an objective reality, but rather the limits of our tools of knowledge. This is why ethics has something to do with the truth, paraphrasing Emily Dickinson⁵⁴, who said that truth and beauty are sisters, we can also state that truth and ethics are sisters. Then comes our second provisional conclusion: *ethics always goes hand in hand with truth.*

Within our field of work, mental health, we are constantly affected by ethical issues: sometimes as problems, other times as dilemmas and again many other times without even realizing that we are being affected, which emerge as something bothersome in our practice of assistance. From the definitions of mental health and illness, passing through the indication of psychotherapy or the prescription of a psycho-pharmacological drug, all of these definitions and decisions deal with ethical issues.

Ethics is not present only in important moments of life (decisions on life/death or other great bioethical dilemmas). Ethics is also present in the small acts of professional practice. It is an axis which is present every day,

54 Emily Dickinson, (1830-1886) Part Four: Time and Eternity. *I died for beauty, but was scarce/ Adjusted in the tomb/ When one who died for truth was lain/ In an adjoining room. / He questioned softly why I failed?/ "For beauty," I replied./ "And I for truth, - the two are one;/ "We brethren are," he said./ And so, as kinsmen met a night/ We talked between the rooms,/ Until the moss had reached our lips,/ and covered up our names.*

giving sense and orienting behaviours. Therefore, our third provisional conclusion is: *Ethics is an everyday issue.*

If ethics is what we do with freedom, whatever we do will be marked by a corpus of values. This corpus forms a constitutive part of our psychism. In general, we are accustomed to thinking of psychism as a great representational reservoir, with its content of ideas and its burden of affections. We are not so accustomed to thinking of it as reservoir of values, of principles that organize life, giving it a valued meaning. These principles and this possibility of attributing valued meaning constitute us in a privileged manner. Our values, accepted by generations, precede us – as, in general, culture precedes us – and end up being internalized. We now reach the fourth provisional conclusion: *ethics is an intrinsic part of psychism: we are those values.*

A child asked his father: “Dad, what is ethics?” After thinking it over a few minutes the father responded: “Let’s suppose that a client enters a shop, spends fifty dollars and pays with a one hundred dollar bill, but forgets to collect his change. Ethics is if I tell my partner that the client forgot about the change or I don’t tell him”. There are struggles with respect to values, there is no doubt about that. In fact, the term *dis-values* has been coined to refer to those values opposed to the ones we uphold. This is an ideological struggle for excellence. There are values that fight to displace others, values that are imposed and values that fall out of consideration. For instance, industriousness has fallen out of use, it is no longer valued to be a hard worker. How could it be when work is so scarce, not acknowledged and badly paid? To save money has also become something of the past: years ago there was a day in which to save money was celebrated: the 31st of October, “Day of Saving Money” and children were taught how to save money (the savings account book and the piggy bank are now museum artifacts that prove that this was so). How can one sustain the value of saving money when confronted with the devaluation of our currency, hyperinflation, financial speculation, credit cards and the seizure of savings which banks and governments carry out? How can we do so when up against a brutally stimulated consumerism? There are values that are construed at determined epochs, when faced with determined political moments. We have been present during the last few years of the enthroning of success as practically a supreme value. In general, success is measured by the money and the social status one has (what is popularly now called: *the rich and the famous*). It is no longer *the consequence of* (an effort, an

ability, other values: hard-working, honesty, creativity, etc.), but rather a value of its own accord. As such, it then self-legitimizes itself, that is to say, it does not matter how success is reached, what matters is that it is reached. This places value on the person and also “legitimizes” him. The successful person is not questioned – because he is successful! Thus the fifth and, for the moment, last of our provisional conclusions: *ethics is upheld in values and these are not permanent, on the contrary, they are located in a territory of dispute.*

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Assistance to torturers: twenty-five years later

Daniel Kersner

A first conclusion, some twenty years after this article⁵⁵, is that it is not true that twenty years is not a long time (as a well-known tango goes). If we were to remember everything that we went through in those twenty years, the effect would be overwhelming. Classically, memory is defined as the capacity to fix information, to store it, to have the power to evoke and to recognize the product of that evocation as something of the past, like a remembrance. Etymologically, we know that to remember is *to again pass through the heart*; every time that we remember something, the affectionate universe is activated and also an interpretation of the events is put into action an interpretation that is sustained in lived experiences and beliefs. So that remembering is not really free, there is always a cost. We are accustomed to thinking that for the psychic apparatus the cost is in repressing, of keeping that which makes us suffer under control. But there is also a cost in remembering. For this reason, the construction of memory is a difficult task, one that is not without suffering. And if we were to remember everything and all the time, like Funes – Borges' character– we would not be able to think. And if we forget everything, we would lose our identity, as we have seen in many films when someone loses their memory – generally as a cause of a traumatic event – , and with this, they also lose their identity. A necessary equilibrium exists between memory and oblivion. The apparatus needs to get rid of memories to be able to keep its relationship with reality permeable, but it also needs to remember so as to maintain the coordinates that determine the identity of the subject, his being in the world. And, there are also policies of memory and policies of oblivion, which induce us to remember or to forget in tune with those in power.

At the social level, collective memory constitutes, as Halbwachs (1950)

⁵⁵ I am referring to the article *Would you attend to a torturer?* Buenos Aires, 1998 which was published in *Efectos psicológicos de la represión política*.

stated, *guidelines for the new generations*, a lesson to transmit the prescribed behaviours of the group, as well as an interpretation of the past according to the interests of the present. If *truth lies within memory*, as the poets of ancient Greece sustained, it is no lesser true that memory will start to modify itself when faced with new necessities. Collective memory *assures the identity, nature and value of a group*, it unifies in the shared exercise and gives us back parts that have been lost of our own history. In this sense, *memory are the others*.

Broadening this first conclusion, we can say that twenty years is considerable and that much water has passed under the bridge. More specifically, I keep on thinking that one cannot give assistance to a torturer within a context of impunity, whether this impunity is generalized or is present in the torturer's particular case. One cannot do this with a person who has been living outside the *Thou shall not kill* precept, the basis of all social relationships – and if this being outside this precept, this uplifting of the interdiction has the support of the State. The greatest context of impunity existed while the laws of *Due Obedience* and *Full Stop* were in force as well as the pardons. Fortunately, this is not the case today.

Freud used to say that the first cultural requirement was justice (1915). To be able to give assistance to a repressor, it is a necessary condition that this person be judged and condemned, with a prison sentence in a common jail. Why do I clarify all this? Because this person must be included within the same order and under the same legality as the rest of society, which means that he must be part of that culture. To consider him outside that order and that legality is to put him outside culture and to freeze him in his identity as a repressor. On the other hand, any regime of exceptions takes away the graveness of the crimes committed.

There are no known cases of repented or self-critical repressors, there are simply a few *talkers*. Personally, I suppose that most of the repressors are still convinced of their actions; possibly some might be alienatedly convinced. I also believe that what they did is on the limit of what is bearable, and that a trial and punishment would mitigate their guilt. To give them assistance within a context of impunity is, besides, an insurmountable technical obstacle, as the therapist and the patient would not be participating within the same legality. This, undoubtedly, would affect the relationship: as a latent threat, as a retaliatory fantasy, as a redened phenomenon or in any other manner that I haven't mentioned. But I am sure that death and crime would be present in that relationship in one form or another, as they

surely are in the relationship between the repressors who appropriated children and the children of the missing-detainees.

I have a second conclusion, which slightly contradicts my first conclusion. One should not fear contradictions, for this is the way that thought evolves and makes them work. Now there is an ideal in post-modernity in relation to harmony, one has to be in harmony, one has to live harmonizing. But society presents a struggle of interests, of sectors, of classes, in a permanent manner. And even the psychic apparatus has its own instances of struggle. Let us go, therefore, to the second conclusion: *here things do not finish happening*, so we undergo that *perpetual present* which is typical of what is traumatic. I would like to clarify that the use of the adjective perpetual is intentional, it refers to a punishment without an end. To illustrate that here things do not end, let us think, for example, since when have we heard that we are in crisis. Gramsci said that crisis was the moment in which whatever was supposed to die had not yet died and what was about to be born, had not yet been born. It was a moment. Which are these crises that are always present? Are they chronic crises? Following Kaës (1979), we can think of the crises as moments of non-support, of a loss of a supporting means. And we can also think of a crisis as an exception, as the alteration of daily norms. This would place us before a paradox: for us, the exception is the rule.

The third conclusion is that if things do not end and we continue in a perpetual present, *you lose the notion of future*. I refer to the future as a space-time concept where we project ourselves, the one that permits the emergence of an ideal of the ego and of utopia. Without a notion of the future there is no space for projects, and as these feed off desires and fantasies, without a future the desiring capacity and its scenification – which is fantasy – are affected. In summary, we need to be able to *futurize*, i.e., we need a free future ahead, so as to be able to desire, to make fantasies and to project our life.

It is true that in some aspects we are better off than before; it is good and useful to recognize this. Thus we do not reinforce the sensation of perpetual present. The trials against the repressors are an achievement of the human rights movements, which have sustained the struggle over the decades. In turn, the trials are being carried out as a piecemeal, with an exasperating slowness which is very wearing out for the witnesses and complainants, and in the middle of threats and of intimidating acts. It is within this context that Jorge Julio López disappeared and perpetrator Febres was poisoned.

Without doubt, these situations blur the future, they invade it with the past and doubts. It stops being a liberated territory where we can project ourselves vitally and turns into a minefield because of the non-resolved past.

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The rights of patients: informed consent or informing with sentiment?

Daniel Kersner

1 . Recently I accompanied a friend who was to undergo a coronary catheter test in a prestigious hospital of Buenos Aires, whose origin belongs to the Mediterranean community and today I am not sure who it belongs to. After some comings and goings in which we were not sure if my friend was seriously ill or not, it is decided – by family vote – to carry on with the catheter test. A week before, my friend had suffered a typical angina episode, besides being the bearer of all the factors of cardiac risk. A few minutes before being taken into the operating room, the doctor in charge gives him a 40 - A4page booklet, saying: “*Read this, it is the research protocol. If you agree to it, sign it. Read it calmly, hey*”, she says and leaves. The booklet is full of medical jargon, names of drugs, statistical charts and bibliography in another language. I think he was supposed to take something for his high cholesterol. I say suppose, because I understood less than half of what I was reading and my friend, logically, understood absolutely nothing. He looked at me and said: “*What should I do?*”.

2 - It is known that the heart is the second most prized organ by man. And even if it does not give us all the satisfaction of the first, it is essential, among other things, for that purpose too. Ten minutes later the doctor returned: “*Did you read it all?*”, she asked my friend, who is looking like he wants to go home. Forty pages in ten minutes means 4 pages per minute, or put another way, 15 seconds per page I remember an old advertisement about rapid reading. “*If you agree to this test, we will also check your healthy arteries*”, she states very candidly. Is there something in all this that sounds like blackmail or am I being a bit paranoid? Oh, I had forgotten: in the booklet it stated that the patient was free to leave the research at any moment that he wanted to and that there would be no consequences. That’s not bad: I reminded him, that at least, he was a free man.

3 - I would like to say something to the doctor but I feel it is not the right moment. My head is filled with old words and concepts: doctor-patient relationship, empathy, containment, first not to damage, cure sometimes, accompany always and other such sayings. Here they have a more modern stand: this is *informed consent*, the star of the moment, the privileged tool of the *principle of autonomy*, which has displaced the anachronic *principle of charity* – part of *paternalist medicine* – from the ranking. So that we find ourselves before a new paradigm. And to top it all off, it looks like a good one! However, in some moment there has been a slide and a transformation: from informed consent we have passed onto well signed consent, which in reality seems to be the only things that matters.

4 - We wait while the catheter test is being carried out, the patient's sister, his boss and me. In the middle of the procedure, a doctor comes out (who seems to be the boss of the former doctor) and informs us that a coronary artery is 93% blocked. They must put in a stent. It is then that I think of two things: 1- luckily, they got it in the nick of time, 2- thank God this doctor is here, because if not, the doctor who was operating would have had to come out. This new doctor tells us that there are two type of stents, and asks us which one we prefer to have inserted. My friend's sister looks at me, his boss looks at me and the doctor had already been looking at me: I had never seen a stent, I am not even sure of how to write it. I tell the doctor to use the stent he considers more convenient, that the only thing I now about the subject is something a cardiologist friend of mine told me the night before: the ones that need drugs are not convenient. The doctor then goes on to tell me that in the experience of the service of the hospital (which has a long list of cases), he does not agree with what my cardiologist friend said, and backs it up with the statistics from some other centres and whatnot. I tell him that for that precise reason we are not in condition to make the choice. He says OK, but that there is another issue: type A stent is 100% covered by the medical insurance, type B stent is only 50% covered, that the administrative employee can give us more information about this. The stent that is recommended for this case is yes, you guessed it: type B. I tell him to insert the stent that is more convenient and that money issues will be handled later. Yet reality shows us that what is economic should always be handled before.

5 - A simple definition tells us that *informed consent* "is the agreeing

of the patient to receive a medical or surgical procedure or any other type of treatment for the physical and psychic wellbeing of the patient, after having received all the pertinent and necessary information to make a free and intelligent decision". It is also the duty of the medical doctor – ethical and legal – and a right of the patient. For the doctor, it is about revealing "the nature and purpose of the procedures, potential risks and benefits and any other reasonable alternative". It constitutes a founding and contractual statement: it fits into and legislates part of the exchange that will be given in the doctor-patient relationship. It defines what in the treatment – whichever one it is – can be done, explicit and accepted norms, voluntary and conscious exchanges. For it to be valid, the following conditions must be present: the patient must have the *adequate information*, for this to be true, he must also *understand* it; it must be *voluntary* (without coercion or undue influences), the patient must be *competent*, which means he must be able to make decisions – that is, to reason and deliberate –, besides, this competence should not be taken as a global attribute but rather as a concept relative to each decision.

6 - Informed consent arises in mid-XXth century as a response to the changes that were produced in medical practice and in the doctor-patient relationship: criticism to *medical paternalism*, while the patient was acquiring greater *self-determination*. On the other hand, it is undeniable that technical-scientific development (machines, invasive treatment, passing from *furor curandis* to *therapeutic fury*) brought about new ethical dilemmas. Macklin sustains that professional expertise or ability does not automatically confer ethical expertise.

7 - It is obvious: informed consent did not represent in the cited example the *principle of autonomy* or of *self-government*. The information has not been of any help in the decision-making, on the contrary, it was an accumulation of information impossible to understand and metabolize. What Freud called effective circumstance, that is to say, the demands of reality in a given situation, has not been taken into account. The minimum time necessary to be able to empathetically connect oneself with the patient was not even considered, i.e., the time necessary to establish an elemental rapport and to listen to the patient's doubts and questions. In fact, he has been told nothing. What has predominated at every moment is the modality of a de-personalized and de-personalizing, technical-operative and phobic-util-

itarian relationship. In summary, we can say that a certain form of coercion has been exercised supported, no doubt, in the structural asymmetry of the relationship.

8 - The doctor-patient relationship is asymmetrical. It is so due to the state of necessity of the person consulting, the regression which accompanies suffering, by the anxiety and emotional lability that is generally generated, the fear of loss, the fantasies of mutilation and corporal fragmentation, the fear of death and the unknown, the uncertainty (always little and badly tolerated). It is also thus, due to the specific weight of our words: weight given by what is transferenceal which is at stake, by our place in relation to suffering, knowledge and to the knowledge of suffering, by the social place of the medical doctor or psychologist, where among other things, mythological and historic models, prejudices and idealizations converge. The freedom of choice of the patient will then have a relative degree, as freedom always has.

9 - Informed consent in psychiatry and psychology is applied both in clinical work as in research (let us remember the echoes produced by the Milgram research). In reference to clinical work, it is applied to the accepting of treatment in a free and voluntary manner. At the beginning and at the end of a treatment. To its methodology and objectives. To the conformity with respect to the diverse elements that make up the contracting conditions of the framework: fees, limits of confidentiality, involvement of third parties, possibility to ask questions and receive answers, etc.

10 - This is not a manifest against informed consent, it is a reflection on the real conditions of its existence. Too frequently an *as if* operates on the consent, where medical responsibility – which is obviously not transferrable – is transferred to the patient or those around him. This transfer, of a possible paranoid etiology, in which the persecutory object is legal action against mala praxis, has made the medical doctors put distance between themselves and their responsibility, even in reference to very specific technical aspects which are common to their sophisticated level of knowledge. The concept has been bureaucratized and above all, its praxis, understanding by this the mode in which a theory becomes a part of the experience. A tool that regulates the doctor-patient relationship has been distorted, converting it into a legal umbrella, similar to the current inserts which accompany medi-

cation: to be legally covered due to secondary and adverse effects they say everything, i.e., they really say nothing. Ultimately, they have passed from the field of medicine to the field of law, and from the doctor-patient relationship to the intra-psychic world of the medical doctor, to his phantoms.

11 - Cain was an agriculturist and Abel had cattle. Both periodically had to offer the product of their work to Yahweh. Jealous because of the preference that Yahweh showed for Abel's offerings lambs Cain beats his brother to death with the jaw of a donkey. Yahweh, who is not present still knows of the crime because He can see all things, asks Cain if he knows where Abel is. "*Am I my brother's keeper*", Cain guiltily responds, proposing an ethics of responsibility through the negative – he *must know* where his brother is, of the "involvement" – he *must take care of* his brother since the term keeper is equivalent to caregiver –, and from "equality" – since it is about his brother, a *peer*. Responsibility, commitment or involvement and equal treatment must always be present in the doctor-patient relationship, in any specialty.

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Personal and institutional implications

Diana Kordon and Darío Lagos

Every activity that we develop includes a subjective factor, a personal commitment from the person carrying out the work. In the case of those who work in mental health, our subjectivity is strongly brought forth and this can either favour or hinder our work. When we are confronted with problems of a psychosocial character, this implication is especially complex and requires a permanent analysis from a personal, group and institutional viewpoint.

In other work carried out by members of our team we have analysed modalities and contents linked to the implication that we have had to face and elaborate.

We would like to point out some issues which currently affect our practice in EATIP.

1) Why do we say that the field of what is psychosocial gives relevance to implication?

The first thing to take into account is that we work with problems that include us as social subjects. Therefore, and to a greater or lesser degree, we are all affected by the situation. That is to say, that the subjective implication is given, fundamentally, by our social belonging and our ethical and ideological position.

The comprehension of the specificities of the problems which arise as a consequence of political and social repression requires that, besides shared feelings and solidary attitude, we assume a position on power, social structure and problems of human rights violations, since social processing has a relationship of interiority with the effects that are produced in the individuals.

EATIP has taken a position and it is publicly acknowledged, i.e., our ideology and conceptual framework are explicit.

We professionals are necessary and inevitable participants of the social scene, of the effects of the hegemonic and counterhegemonic social discourse, and of the identifying social statements. It is impossible for us

to simply stand by since we belong to the same society. This problem is consistent with what Puget and Wender (1982) have called superimposed worlds, in reference to what happens between the patient and the therapist in relation to determined universes that they share. The acknowledgement of this situation questions the idea of a supposed neutrality, which we consider is impossible.

2. The members of our Team have a professional formation as regards concepts and professional institutional belonging, which are theoretically and experientially significant, which give us on the one hand, the essential tools needed for the comprehension of psychological avatars, and on the other hand, they often enter into contradiction with the character of our practice and the analysis which we carry out on our work, as the work and the mechanisms which we implement permanently question the conceptual and technical models that sustain the hegemonic paradigms of our disciplines.

These conflicts have a strong subjective imprint, which we need to elaborate so as not to feel that we are in a situation of eccentricity or foreignness with respect to the professional cultural in which we are inserted.

3. Sharing certain ideals, projects, lived experiences and actions with institutions, groups or people that demand us as professionals is a condition that favours the necessary trust.

On numerous occasions we have pointed out the importance that trust has – which determines the personal or institutional consultation to our team, or which allows us to be accepted when we address a person or group, as well as the relationship of trust that is construed along time. Euphemisms aside, if there is no trust a relationship cannot be established and so the relationship develops new reliabilities. And as trust is an essential factor, it is simultaneously a source of difficulties. For example and in reference to therapies, until not long ago – since as from the irruption of the social and economic crisis many frameworks have been questioned –, in psychotherapeutic clinic in general, we don't take patients who have had a previous relationship with us. In this case, we respect that condition with regard to the therapist, but there is an institutional transference since that patient can be acquainted not only with the institution but also with some of its members.

In other cases it is not the patient who has had a previous relationship,

but they can be direct relatives of someone and this can produce an intense feeling of responsibility within us. The configurations and examples can be quite diverse, but what we would like to point out is that although this problem of transference is present in any institutional space, in our case there are multiple doors of access, the edges can be more ambiguous and the analysis of the framework as well as its vicissitudes constitute an inescapable necessity for the protection of the patient, the therapist, the relationship between both of them, the relationship with the referring institution, and our own relationships and institution.

4. Another problematic situation is when conflicts are produced in the interior of the referring organization and our patients do not agree and may even distance themselves from them. This issue has been and continues to be intensely worked within our Team, and our abstinence from the organization is explicitly agreed. However, it is a factor that weighs subjectively in the therapists and should be permanently supervised in a peer group as well as elaborated at the personal level.

To sustain clarity in reference to non-neutrality – yes, abstinence – allows treatment to be continued and that the institutional relationship not be affected. What is more, we believe that this attitude guarantees respect and trust, both from the patient as well as from the referring institution, since it is concrete proof of the respect to intimacy and to the conscious decisions that people make, which are part of their right to autonomy.

5. It is necessary to bear in mind that ideological agreements can constitute a source of possible defensive complicities from both parties, since they can act as a zone of narcissistic stronghold in the relationship. As we affirmed in another book (Kordon, Edelman and Lagos, 1995), we define the “*zone of stronghold as the linking space marked by a pact in which, in a tenacious and unapparent manner, aspects which are tried not to be considered are deposited. It is a situation of ‘that is not to be spoken about’ because it could put the differences at stake or allow the emergence of strongly repressed, disassociated, disowned or censored aspects*”.

A patient who starts to integrate a therapeutic group takes for granted some of the agreements between himself and the therapist, agreements which in the explicit context exist, as for example the necessity of justice to do away with impunity. But later uses this agreement to allow his intolerance to frustration and difference come forth and has violent reactions with

his companions when they show themselves indifferent to social problems which he considers important. A certain complicity from the therapist is demanded to approve his discourse and behaviour, and uses that agreement to reproach his lack of inconditionality.

6. Many of our patients are publicly known people. This brings about several problems, among which is the excess of self-demand on our part. Another aspect is to resolve the mechanisms which will allow the clinical debate in the Team to preserve the secret imposed by the intimacy and identity of the person being treated. He must not be recognized, anonymity must be maintained.

While debating this issue we were able to prove that, besides the group effort to be cautious in this situation, each one of us therapists spontaneously keeps back information that could put this protection at risk. We are conscious, of course, that this is a limiting factor in that it could contribute information to its clinical comprehension, yet we choose to act in this manner, privileging ethics.

7. The emotional affectation enters into conflict with the necessity of maintaining a space of conceptual elaboration. In traumatic situations of social origin, there is frequently an emotional impact that overwhelms us violently. The approach to these problems requires tolerance to the frustration and to psychic pain, an instrumental distance which allows us to preserve the capacity to think.

8. We are permanently confronted with situations which are over-demanding and urgent. The excess of demand has a point of anchorage in the nature of the task. But at the same time, we superegotistically stimulate it. What we do is never sufficient: we could always do more. The superego function installs and reinstalls itself in spite of the criticism and self-criticism that we permanently carry out. This function is rotating in the Team and in particular, in the group that exercises leadership. This problem is a source of tension, discomfort, feelings of guilt and reproach within the interior of the group.

At the basis of over-demand, which generates these and other conflicts, are the fantasies of omnipotent reparation and of narcissistic indispensability.

9. Frequently we find ourselves faced with the subject of death. Real

death, life-threatening situations, of threats against the integrity of the subject and his family; in summary, situations which refer to death. In the last years, the problem of death has appeared in the survivors themselves of the concentration camps.

We do not receive this material in a passive form. On the contrary, we receive it enhanced by the burden of transference. Death always brings about marks and provokes effects. It also provokes them in our psychism: it activates our own anguish and fantasies and challenges our posture when confronted with it. (Kersner, 1994).

Some authors state that the subject of death and of what is sinister is toxic. And they state it not as a subject that challenges us in the social scene but rather as criticism of those of us who sustain that the problems of the dictatorship have continuity up to the present, through long-term trauma and impunity. This questioning also covers those teams that have been working for a long time on this subject. We do not share this criterion. As we have sustained in another article (Kordon and Edelman, 2007), not only because of the possibility of stigmatization that can be produced in those affected, but for considering that the toxicity is within the reality itself of social structure, being all of us bearers of this.

However, we coincide that this is an important issue to bear in mind and this is precisely one of the motives for which we have as a criterion, which has been sustained since the time of the dictatorship, that the professionals of our Team do not economically depend on nor exclusively develop this clinical work. On the contrary, we maintain our insertion simultaneously in other professional circuits.

If we therapists can preserve ourselves psychically and not be possessed by the phantoms of traumatic situations, we will be in condition to think about the subject. That is to say, we consider that it is possible to preserve the capacity of reflection when we get close to a traumatic problem, in spite of a certain degree of inevitable personal affectation.

10. In EATIP, there are differences among its members – these cover political and ideological issues as well as the conceptual frameworks of what is psychological. These differences are debated and co-exist. However, we must admit that we have achieved to construct, over more than 30 years, a common vision as well as psychological and psychosocial concepts that have been formed as a body of ideas that contain us and make our actions more coherent.

It is a team which has stability of permanence and that struggles against the tendency, which is spontaneous in all groups, to bureaucratization.

Today, the Team is made up of three generations and we have already brought forth the issue of generational transmission. And although this is a subject which deserves a more detailed development, we would like to state that in this work, we are carrying out this process, which we especially like and affects us.

The intergenerational movement fills the group with vitality and interest. At the same time, it is complex and full of contradictions. Generational differences bring about enrichments of contributions, new experience, openness to change, but this process also implies psychic work and institutional work, since conflicts of ideas and power are simultaneously put at stake.

11. The subject of the personal security of the members of the Team is especially manifested when there are social situations which give it relevance. Some examples are the disappearance of Julio López and the wave of threats to witnesses and complainants, the assistance to social organizations who work with youth and face drug-dealing, so that they also suffer attacks and threats, expert examination of the genocidaires, etc.

The problem does not lie in the emergence of fear: it is about creating a space so that the subject can be processed and the members of the Team can talk about it without feeling censored.

12. These problems have created a debate which, said in a metaphorical manner, would be our lived experience of responding to multiple "loyalties", i.e., loyalty towards the patient, loyalty towards the different institutions (formal and informal), loyalty towards theory, towards psychoanalysis, politics, ethics, etc.

Strictly speaking, it is about multiple effects which cause anguish and create conflicts, which we must make conscious and situate them acknowledging our own limitations, sustaining the specificity of the task for which we have been convoked or self-convoked, lowering our omnipotent expectations and defining priorities.

13. Since EATIP was established (in reality it had been set up before in the Team of Psychological Assistance to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, we carry out a weekly meeting which is obligatory for all of us, where clinical problems, institutional policies and subjective problems in relation to our

work and the relationships within the team are debated.

We consider that the practice and concept of psychosocial work requires – almost as a condition – the belonging to a team. We cannot imagine this being thought about in loneliness, we do it within the sustaining context of a group. In these meetings we analyse the conflicts in the interior of the Team. Conscious that the ideology of the so-called post-modernity is expressed in relationships and stimulates an excluding narcissism, we work to construe an ideology which incorporates the us rather than the narcissism of small differences, or the struggle sustained in the fantasy that there is only place for one.

Since 2009 we implemented a mechanism of one meeting per month, in which the professionals and the secretaries of the institution participate, in order to analyse, within a more adjusted framework, the problems of implication. We have the expectation that this mechanism may be a more adequate tool, which will allow us to carry out a follow-up of the process of conceptual, instrumental and experiential integration.

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CONTENTS

- 7 *Prologues*
- 9 *Introduction*

19 APPROACHES

- 21 *Specific views of EATIP's activities of assistance*
Darío Lagos and Diana Kordon
- 33 *Accompanying political prisoners who have been victims of torture*
Darío Lagos, Yamila Pezet, Montserrat Olivera, Pablo Habif
and Nicolás Pedregal
- 47 *Reflection groups*
Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon
- 69 *Cromagnon: a possible clinical and psychosocial approach*
María Silvia Campos
- 77 *Clinical practice with Latin American refugees, construction of a practice*
Noemí Sosa
- 85 *Bolivia: journey to the centre of Native America*
Marcelo Rossi and María Silvia Campos

91 TRIALS AGAINST THE REPRESSORS. CLINICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL REFLECTIONS

- 93 *Witnesses*
Lucila Edelman
- 99 *Trials against the repressors*
Mariana Lagos
- 109 *Retraumatization: a new old story*
Silvana Bekerman

117 *Psychological accompanying of witnesses in the cases of crimes against humanity*

Margarita Cruz, Silvana Bekerman, Cintia Oberti and Mariana Lagos

127 *Psychosocial processing and justice*

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

135 *On the expert examination of former Admiral Massera*

Diana Kordon and Daniel Kersner

137 SUBJECTIVITY, PSYCHOSOCIAL TRAUMA AND CULTURA

139 *Pavement tiles. Imprints of collective memory*

Mariana Lagos, Montserrat Olivera and Cintia Oberti

149 *Resignification of the maternal role and social protagonism*

Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon

159 *Cultural production: contributions from films to the psychosocial processing of collective traumas*

Silvana Bekerman

181 *About what is ominous in the social scene*

Daniel Kersner

187 *Social trauma and silence*

Daniel Kersner

195 *Insecurity or inequality?*

Daniel Kersner

201 *Brief explanations of violence*

Daniel Kersner

207 *Power and appropriation*

Darío Lagos

213 *Subjectivity and psychism*

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

221 TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION. RESEARCH

223 *Introduction*

225 *About silence*

Lucila Edelman and Diana Kordon

237 *Trauma and transgenerational transmission of what is traumatic*

Diana Kordon and Lucila Edelman

259 *State terrorism: second generation*

Silvana Bekerman, Luciana Soutric, Yamila Pezet, Viviana Mazur, Cintia Oberti and Mariana Lagos. Nicolás Pedregal and Pablo Habif

297 IMPLICATION

299 *Psychoanalytical practice within a context of terror*

Lía Ricón

307 *Ethics and mental health*

Daniel Kersner

311 *Assistance to torturers: 25 years later*

Daniel Kersner

315 *The rights of patients: Informed consent or informing with sentiment?*

Daniel Kersner

321 *Personal and institutional implications*

Diana Kordon and Darío Lagos

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