

USING THE THERAPIST'S PREJUDICES

Democratic method in psychotherapy *

José Manuel Pinto

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SUMMARY

Prejudice is invisible to the subject. Sometimes, dark, like the black holes of the universe, and other times, transparent, impossible to see for being so purely obvious and linked to daily life. In any case, it only appears like that when it is illuminated by the look of the "other different". Therefore, it is a fact of essentially interpersonal nature.

In the clinic, the prejudices of the therapist also turn out to be invisible until they come up against the "otherness" of the patient, and they lead us to a dead end. In order to solve them, a winnicottian and relational use is proposed: to communicate them and share them with the patient, and, destroy them, in their omnipotent character of unquestionable sentences, so that in that way they can be used, only, in those texts where they turn out to be adequate. This is exemplified in two case studies and in a vignette.

In theory, the essential tension between the "to know and not to know" of the Socratic method is recuperated, the beginning of "fallibility" defended by the pragmatic Americans – who understood the value of ideas for their capacity of being revisable and adaptable to new contexts- and the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer: "It is necessary to notice one's own preventions so that the text itself appears in its otherness and makes its truth effective against one's own opinion". These bases are applied to the reformulation of the new theoretical concept of thirdness.

Finally, the context of analysis is widened. An in depth study of the democratic ideal in our psychoanalytical institutions is advocated, against the remains of the "aristocratic prejudice" which generates relationships of idealisation, and inhibits the development of creativity, for example, by means of the abuse of resorting to arguments of authority, instead of using a logic of reasoned consensus.

Key words: prejudice, use of the object, thirdness, complementary duality, democratic duality, democratic ideal, fallibility.

1. VALIDITY OF THE SOCRATES METHOD

The recognition and overcoming of prejudices has a long history which begins in the philosophy of Socrates which arrives to us through the dialogues of Plato. One of them, which is titled *Laques*, has been the object of reiterated analysis due to, on the one hand, the transparency with which the Socratic method is shown and, on the other hand, the choice of the topic which is being dealt with: the definition of bravery, a basic component of virtue or Greek *areté*. In this play there are four characters apart from Socrates: two fathers, who are worried about the education of their boys, and two famous generals (Laques and Nicias) who know what bravery is from their own experiences, the topic which is being debated.

As much in this dialogue as in Plato's others, a logical structure of the Socrates method appears, made up of three consecutive steps:

- 1. Definition of a concept:** in Laques opinion, bravery is "not running away".
- 2. Recognition of a prejudice:** Socrates remembers the battle of Platea in which the Greeks ran away from the Persians, in order to break their lines, and subsequently, turn around and beat them. The opinion of Nicias differentiates bravery from fear.
- 3. Reformulating the concept:** Socrates, together with the generals, manage to redefine bravery as "a sensible resistance".

This logical structure can repeat itself as many times as needed, as long as the reformulated concept requires new revisions. We see that it is about an "optimistic" model of thought: it is workable for everyone and it teaches us the usefulness of reason in order to go beyond the prejudices of common sense (Botton A., 2000).

On the other hand, the dialogue is a drama with a well defined relational structure. The fathers expect to receive advice from the experts, the two military men. However, Socrates destroys these preconceived ideas, and in so doing, makes those, who had been seen as experts, recognise their ignorance, their "not knowing". A frustration and a disillusionment which pushes the generals to pass on the role of expert onto the philosopher. Finally, the dialogue finishes with a projection towards Socrates of an idealised transfer. However, he is not going to be seduced by this flattery: he recognises that he neither has been able to respond to other new questions and that he too would have to look for a teacher for himself. And in the meantime until a wiser person comes along, he proposes to maintain the dialogue open and to continue reflecting together until the following day.

Therefore, we can also confirm that the relational structure is pessimistic and tragic: it confronts us with the unfinished and necessarily limited of any of our achievements, with the desperation of not being able to escape from the territory of "not knowing".

Now, how can one assume this tragic limitation and, simultaneously, be an optimist and trust in our ability to progress? The wise answer of the philosopher consists precisely in avoiding the dilemma between the motives of optimism and pessimism. Here resides, therefore, the validity of the Socrates way of thinking in these times of creative epistemological revolutions and "cartesian anxiety", the fact that one has to admit that there are no unquestionable bases to our knowledge. Socrates recognises this tragedy of the human being: to have the ability to increase knowledge and, simultaneously, realise that this knowledge will always be unfinished and surmountable. Socrates teaches us to coexist with this tension in the way of the transitional space of Winnicott or of the achievement of thirdness of Benjamin. On the contrary to Hamlet, we need to accept **"To know and not to know"**: That is the real question.

In the opposite direction of this essential tension, the accommodation of prejudice produces the calm of a rocky, provincial and unquestionable knowledge. Normally, prejudice is not aware of itself, it doesn't exist for the person who carries it. It is invisible, like the mysterious black holes of the universe, or on the contrary, transparent, due to it being excessively day to day and obvious. It only comes to light when looked at by the "different other": therefore, it is a fact of essentially interpersonal nature.

Conceptually, it is about a cross concept for all human sciences: philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, etc. And that it integrates all mental functions: predisposition for action, systems of beliefs and cognitive processes, and solid and intense emotional states.

2. AN EXAMPLE OF USING PREJUDICES BY THE THERAPIST

Penelope, an attractive and educated woman of 35 years of age, started a treatment of psychotherapy after an extended depressive state caused by the accumulation of various factors. In spite of her having a university degree and other post-graduate courses, she had only been able to find herself short contract jobs which offered her work below her professional ability, and after a problem at work, she was obliged to return to her family's home, with her pride hurt and the bitterness of renouncing her years of independence. A return even more painful if one adds on top of this the old family arguments which were rekindled with authoritarian parents, unable to legitimise her worldly experiences. Moreover, the recent break up with her partner confronted her with a certain responsibility in the failure. All her relationships resulted in being full of anguish because of the torturing doubts about the decision of whether or not she should say "yes" or "no" definitively when the time came to choose if

they were worth fighting for or not. There were many comings and goings, according to whether her need for attachment or her needs for freedom and mental space were at the foreground or background.

After about one year, she started a new relationship with a man who was different from the previous ones, much more emotionally stable, who made her feel confident and relaxed, although he was also different in a new way. He was nearly twenty years older than her. And then in that moment, strangely enough, it was I who most doubted this situation. I couldn't stomach this ambivalence: on the one hand, I thought it was positive that she was able to start a new, steady and loving relationship but on the other hand, I saw it as a short cut to solve, in one quick stroke, all her unrealised needs (a nice house, to achieve a status which corresponded to her age, to have children, etc.).

As the time passed, my mental block increased as I was unable to "digest" my ambivalence -which, in some way, was also hers-, and finally, in order to get out of this impasse, I chose to share my doubts, as Safran and Muran recommend (2000), and I told Penelope: "I think I have a prejudice against this new relationship due to the big age gap between the two of you. On the one hand, the relationships that I have known like this are not normally successful. However, I also recognise it might just be a personal prejudice and that my premonition might not come true."

From this moment on, the process of psychotherapy became fluid again and was reactivated. Penelope started a long period of emotional springtime: she lived her relationship in a relaxed and happy way, while her new love showed himself to be coherent, pleasant and full of life. And the "spinning and tumbling" of the torturous doubts was left to one side and substituted by a growing ability to put in place her needs within a relationship.

In *winnicottian* terms (1968), in this case the "using of an object" could be achieved: the prejudice. When it is formulated and shared, it became destroyed and ceased to work as an omnipotent object. From that moment onwards, it could be used in order to be rejected or taken into consideration again as just another alternative version

It is important to warn people that the same result would not have been reached by using the classic concept of "neutrality": if the prejudice had neither been formulated nor shared, the therapist would have fought to find an interior synthesis towards her ambivalence, yes, but probably the final result would have been an indecisive position which would not have helped the patient to live her relationship in an unworried way, as it would, in a subterranean way, contribute to strengthen her doubts.

In conclusion, when we accept that it is impossible for a therapist to reach an unquestionable and neutral position (Stolorow R, Atwood G., Orange D., 1997), the objective of not falling into scepticism and approaching higher levels of truth, must pass through the **selective appropriation of one's opinions**

and prejudices. Or as Gadamer affirms (1986), "It is necessary to notice one's own preventions so that the same text may appear in its otherness and therefore let its truth be valued against its own opinion".

3. THIRDNESS: ANTIDOTE AGAINST IMPASSE DUE TO CONFRONTATION

In order for the exposure to be more didactic, let us imagine a more exaggerated variation of the previous case. Let us imagine a Penelope of 20 years of age who has just started a relationship with a man twice her age. And once this becomes known to the family, a violent and bitter conflict arises between the mother and the daughter, due to the antagonistic postures of defence which have been getting stronger and stronger with the passing of time. The more the mother criticises the relationship, the more Penelope falls in love and the more she enjoys her forbidden love trysts with her lover as a result of the "Romeo and Juliet effect". In line with this, the more time this falling in love lasts, the more scared the mother gets, and the more she perceives everything as complete madness.

Mother and daughter would be living a "complementary situation", as has been brilliantly described by Benjamin (2004). Facing the same situation, completely antagonistic attitudes are maintained: either it is a marvellous "falling in love" or it is a dangerous folly. Benjamin describes these complementary structures as reciprocally dependent, in the way of relationships of domination and submission. The alternative is to maintain one's own integrity and destroy the criteria of the other, or be destroyed and undergo the other: "either you or me". Aron (2006) uses the metaphor of a children's see-saw in order to express the underlying symmetry to these conflicts, where the position of each one is an unavoidable reaction to the constraining action of the other. If freedom of mental space is lacking, only the possibility of a one-dimensional movement exists, from one pole in a straight line to the opposite pole, to then go straight back to the starting place: either dominating or dominated, either active or passive. For this reason, Benjamin concludes that analysing "how to escape from complementary duality constitutes the authentic challenge of the intersubjective theory".

A sensible tradition in order to overcome *the impasse* in which both mother and daughter are trapped could be to turn to a third party (the father, the therapist or any other person) with the aim of getting this person to act out the role of, mediator, Justice of the Peace. However, a new problem would be created: now everything would depend on the third party's criteria that could maintain the prejudice of a more politically correct way. In this case, Penelope would become disconnected from her original feelings, and the unprejudiced opening to her new experience would be illegitimized.

Benjamin (2004) is right in his criticism of the previous conception of a neutral and indifferent third which, in reality can only exist as a "persecutory invader". She considers that, for a person to be able to act as a third, he or she has to be emotionally connected to both members of the diada: he or she has to be someone to whom both the mother and the daughter love, respect and share. And she also proposes that the space of the third must be constructed immediately in the dual relationship: "the mother, or the first carer, must create this mentioned space being able to maintain the tension between her subjectivity/wish/conscience and the needs of the child".

For this reason, Benjamin has created a new concept, **thirdness**, which is defined as a process of creation of interior mental space (like the potential space of Winnicott), produced by the ability of surrender (Ghent E., 1990), a letting one "escape from oneself" in order to understand the point of view of the other. Aron has developed the concept of thirdness as the practical ability of identifying oneself on the other side of the complementary duality as an overcoming of the fortified positions. A sort of lateral movement which makes one exploit the narrowness of the one-dimensional movements between the complementary extremes, and ends up opening a triangular space. This process of construction of a shared third involves the existence of two simultaneous components, according to Benjamin and Aron (2006):

- The **rythmic third** which arises from the principal of mutual accommodation like in the harmony created by two people who dance together in tune to the music.
- The **moral** or **symbolic third** that creates a space for the differentiation within a climate of unity. An example would be the ability of contain of a mother with her baby, which doesn't involve only empathy, but the ability to maintain a different point of view: knowing that this pain will finally fade away. A behaviour which turns out to be more reassuring than the mere exact symmetry with the feelings of the other.

Back to the case study, we can see how the use of shared thirdness deactivated the *impasse* caused by the mutual prejudices. In a first stage, Penelope alternated days in which she enjoyed her new relationship with others in which she had an unending list of doubts. Then, she returned to the old relational outline of "**yes OR no**". And in parallel, I found myself mixed up in the same net. Was it harmful or beneficial to continue this relationship? We were playing at "taking stock". Any aspect seemed to shift the balance towards the positive pole, when a few minutes later a new idea threw off balance the previous position, overturning the judgement to the other complementary extreme, and so on and so forth.

In reality, both of us were looking for a classic third : a neutral judge to weigh up the evidence and pass a sentence with the authority of the supreme court. The patient dressed me with the power of a scientist with a superior authority,

that with his experience, would be able to liberate her from this vicious mental circle. And I assumed this role that seemed to be my obvious responsibility, inexcusable.

The turning point came when it was accepted and shared that, in spite of everything, preconceived ideas could be dealt with. The recognition of the "not knowing" freed me from the role of judge. At the same time, the patient was freed from being judged and judging herself continuously.

In accordance with Benjamin, a shared third was created: patient and therapist tuned in and adapted to each other, which contributed in facilitating the development of her relationship (rhythmic third). And on the other hand, on destroying the omnipotence of prejudice, and the supposed existence of a neutral and omniscient third, our differences could now be used to think about the dark parts of the relationship as they arose (moral third).

With the passing of time, important mistakes and new problems in the relationship, obviously, started to appear, which reactivated again the primitive doubts about whether it was worth continuing or stopping the relationship. But we now had two relationship patterns: the old model of "yes or no", and the new one of "**yes AND no**". The use of the old model didn't let her say a vigorous "yes" or put herself in play completely, due to being restrained by her doubts and fears. But paradoxically, it didn't let her commit herself to a definite "no", as the balance shifted quickly to the opposite side. The "no" today would be the "yes" of tomorrow, and vice versa. On the contrary, to really assume thirdness means to be able to identify with both poles, also with the ability to opt for a "no" and finish the relationship if it were necessary.

4. THE DEVASTATING LOGIC

Diana and Hector, both about the age of forty, asked for couple therapy immediately after it was discovered the infidelity of the husband, an "explosion" which had blown to bits a calm and good relationship which they had maintained for years. By chance, Diana came across evidence that showed that her husband had had a sexual relationship with another woman. And Hector had no choice but to admit that he had been unfaithful to her on three occasions, after having visited a web-site of sexual encounters.

During the first phase, Diana was very distressed. Her behaviour swung between two conflicting movements: some days she desperately wanted to return to her **blind faith** which had always been the base of her security and trust in her partner, and it was based on what she called the "devastating logic". She started off with two suppositions: "I know that I am not going to cheat on him" and "He is the same as me", in order to conclude that, therefore: "He would never cheat on me". On the other hand, other days she would feel overcome with a feeling of **complete distrust**, also based on a devastating logic. Diana argued that if "he has cheated on me once" it is a signal that "I

don't know him at all" y, therefore, "he can cheat on me at any time". Any of these two poles of the complementary duality -blind faith or complete distrust- were pure extremes that excluded each other, and took her to a dead end.

On my behalf, I tried to help contain Diana's distress and fight against her rigid logic. I showed how the basic suppositions were false: both the old -"He is like me"- and the new -"I don't know him at all"- . My objective was to apply the remedy of thirdness, and recognise that the new balance of the couple could no longer recuperate the illusion of blind faith. It would be necessary to contain the two opposite states of herself and of the relation: the confidence and the mistrust. In fact, a certain level of mistrust could even help to find a less idealising rebalance.

For a while, this medicine offered beneficial effects. But suddenly....an unforeseen thing happened. In a fit of scepticism, Diana had a look into the computer in Hector's office, and she found a new "great surprise" which seriously worsened the version that, up until that moment, we had been managing: it turned out that Hector had had many more sexual relations and that, literally, he had been hooked for about one year to a web-site with sexual contents for up to five or six hours a day, and all this mysteriously without it having the least effect on his professional productivity in the eyes of his boss.

Now it became evident that this version of the reality discovered by Diana was more accurate, she had reached a higher grade of truth, than that which I had offered her before..... Then, "where was my mistake?" Of course there was the possibility of there existing a blacker reality than that which Hector had admitted to, but he was very ashamed of himself and feared losing his wife. But he was such a responsible, reasonable and timid man, who never came over as person with a highly dissociated and addictive behaviour. However, it seems clear that in that moment it had seemed more comfortable for me to find a synthetic third position, starting from a nicer image of Hector. And that I didn't dare to explore the pole of mistrust, as Diana had so bravely done. "Something" in her devastating logic showed me the mistakes of my idealisation of thirdness, leaning towards the politically correct.

5. THE PREJUDICE OF THIRDNESS: THE SUBJECTIVITY OF THE THIRD

Thirdness has been built as a concept which takes away the monopoly of the classic third -the father- as the only means of overcoming the imaginary, and an exclusive access to the symbolic world. For this reason, it has been recognised that these achievements already occur in dual relationships mother-child. Benjamin (2004) understands thirdness as a **function**, and this is positive because it widens its application enormously. For example, in the moment of thinking in states of *self* confronted in complementary polarities, and on the road to getting out of this kind of *impasses*. However, when one becomes abstracted from the concrete third, one forgets that we always carry

out this function from a place which is questionable, and that we cannot be blind towards **the distorting effects of the subjectivity of the third.**

We also look at how it is necessary to incorporate another element to the concept of thirdness: Subjectivity, the position of the third, be it a third person or a third mental place... All thirdness must think of itself like a trial of First Instance, in which any of the parties has the right to an appeal or a revision.

An obvious qualm about the use of this case study, could be the fact that conclusions are established from the management of the first distorted version of Hector. And, therefore, the performance of thirdness would be manipulated as we were working with partially false information. It seems to me to be an argued criticism. However, I believe that, precisely because of managing with distorted information, it offers a more general and complex model of the problem of thirdness. Inevitably, we will have to work on impure, partial and contaminated polarities due to defence mechanisms and dissociated mental states.

Back to the case study, the new revelations of unfaithfulness made the mistrust, due to what had happened in the past, reach its lowest ever level. Now, the mistrust that Diana appeared to have about what would happen in the future, possible repeats of this behaviour, and separation were inevitable. Depending on the day, the situation found a new balance. Hector felt like a medieval knight trying to get back his lady from the castle tower. At times he was welcomed, and at others, stones and arrows rained down on him. In contrast, the scrutinising behaviour of Diana increased: every few days she turned into a detective in search of new accusatory proof in his cell phone or his computer.

In order to calm things down, I recommended to them that she should transform this impulsive scrutinising behaviour into a system of inspection, in which he would accept having his computers and cell phones checked on a regular basis once a month. At first, both of them thought this to be a ridiculous idea, an abuse of his rights of intimacy, it nearly seemed that way to me too. I argued that this right had its limits: for example, we would all agree to doing this to a son or daughter who took drugs and hid their addiction. It would be about, well, legitimising the right to carry out periodical inspections, and that the objective was the recuperation of lost faith. Moreover, this proposal would suppose an improvement on the previous situation of impulsive, indiscriminate and multiple checks: the limit of just one inspection per month would control this necessity of checking.

Finally, they put it into practice and it worked: it calmed them both down. Really, this was an emerging idea of the common context, that would have never occurred to me before, but the courage of Diana to fully express her mistrust, and my being in tune with her, permitted me to think on new bases. On the other hand, a difference was introduced: the limitation of once a month, the "professionalisation" and transformation of this inspection into a routine, in so doing, losing its initial compulsive character. In this case we see that a new

application of the function of thirdness: a rhythmic third that fully understood the need of inspection and a moral third which confirms a difference and reaches a consensus.

Moreover, one has to add a third important element: **the position of the third is changing**, it is transforming itself, because of reciprocal influences. In a first stage, the therapist tries to mediate between the idealised blind faith and her *prophet of doom* like mistrust. In a second stage, the position of the third is disorientated, thanks to the strengthening of Diana in one of the sides of duality, what indicates that the pole of mistrust changes places. From here on, a new duality between impulsive inspection and the right of intimacy is created, as well as the need to find another third position in order to establish a new synthesis.

In conclusion, I maintain that the real prejudice of thirdness resides in its conceptualisation, with independence of the posture, situation and context of the third. The new term has been defined in a way that we can free ourselves from the suffocating monopoly of the classic third, specified in the father figure or therapist. This has resulted in being very positive: the interaction of the active principles of thirdness (being in tune and differentiation) make up a more refined and effective medicine in order to solve the serious illness of the *impasse* due to confrontation, the never-ending deadlock between different and confronted subjectivities. However, the position of the third has been eliminated and not embodied. In reality, the progress should be a movement which overcomes the monopoly of the classic and specified third, in order to reach a plurality of thirds, or of third parts of the *self*.

There is always a third position in thirdness which acts as a catalyst and anchorage of this function. In the example of Benjamin of the rhythmic third, it talks about the experience of the type of music which accommodates itself to the dancers. And in the earlier case study, it would be the prejudiced idea about the personality of Hector. One cannot forget that thirdness is not practised from just one unquestionable position, but from also subjective positions. Orange(2005) has reminded us that: "All experience is interpretative, therefore perspectival, no one, and no group of people can take more than a partial view of anything". This is, as Diana would say, devastating logic.

So, the problem of thirdness is placed in a Socratic context, from which it can be thought of as a process of intersubjective revision, as the limitations of the subjectivity of "the" third are overcome, and the polarities to synthesise are reformulated.

6. DEMOCRATIC DUALITY: ANTIDOTE AGAINST THE IMPASSE DUE TO DISTANCING

Safran and Muran (2000) differentiate two types of *impasse* based on the predominant motivation. They consider that in the *impasse* due to "confrontation" the need of asserting one's personality dominates that of the need of affiliation or attachment, while in the *impasse* due to "distancing" the opposite occurs: the need of affiliation is imposed on the desire for autonomy. We have already verified how thirdness is the best antidote against *impasse* due to confrontation. However, the same effects are not obtained in the *impasse* due to distancing. To illustrate the problem, let us have a look at a little vignette.

After a few years of personal psychotherapy with my first didactic analyst, one day I recommended to him that he should read a book which had fascinated me, *Learning from the patient* by Casement (1985), in which the author detects and admits to the errors of the therapist and uses them in favour of the development of psychotherapy. To this proposal, my analyst rapidly answered: "That's a load of bollocks!". Of course, his answer couldn't have been clearer. I was struck dumb, perplexed and "crushed". But I understood the message: it was not possible to openly deal with some problems in our relationship.

However, this situation had its price. The apparent normality during the following two years until the end of the psychotherapy, required me to hide away in my storeroom a large amount of my experiences, in order not to lose his affection, or show ingratitude for what had been achieved during the treatment. The result was an experience of *impasse* due to distancing: The storeroom was far away and it was cold.

In *winnicottian* terms, I wasn't able to make use of the object because it did not survive my initiative, and it was experienced as a destruction of his therapeutic valour. Now, something more is needed than to survive: the ability to live together in situations of intersubjective disjunction. This entails a setting of democratic relationships, in which the valour of the genuine mutual opposition is legitimised, as a creative tension of potential consensus or positions of thirdness.

I propose to use the term **democratic duality** as the sensible resistance that allows us to accept situations of intersubjective opposition. A non-complementary duality, in which the therapist makes easy the disagreement of the patient (Bollas C., 1987), and a mutuality is established (Aron L., 1996) in the legitimisation of a constructive opposition.

All of this is obvious in the field of social speech, but it turns out to be subtle and difficult to apply in the asymmetric relationship of psychotherapy, where the therapist is needed to carry out the role of authority (Hoffman I. Z., 1998). There are many chances of creative duality not working. In my particular case,

it could be attributed to a relationship pattern which I shared with my analyst: the need of idealisation. My old analyst, a brilliant professional, loved to be idolised, and worked very well when he played the role of mother, father or teacher. We made a great team, I was the expert idealizer. I had been very well trained due to my family environment, in the role of admirer. My therapist wanted to be Freud, and I, not sure of being more modest or more practical, settled for being like him.

Therefore, we can observe how the cases of *impasse* due to distancing are based on situations of **dysfunctional intersubjective conjunction** (Stolorow R., Atwood G., 1992), whose solution involves the creation of a democratic duality which legitimises the distance between patient and therapist, instead of the idealised union based on a hidden distancing.

7. FROM ARISTOCRATIC PREJUDICE TO THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

If we enlarge the context of analysis, we can see that, not only is it frequent to see the pattern of idealised relationships within our psychoanalytical families of belonging, but it is also about one of our habitual relationship models.

David Tuckett (1998), who was the editor of the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis for thirteen years, has complained about the lack of creativity of a large number of writers whom he has had to evaluate. Texts which lack a logic of reasoned out consensus, and which resort many times to the arguments of authority, a "showing the worth of" the ideas to which, in a large extent are in tune with the *biblical scriptures*: the Freudian text.

Of course, this adoration towards Freud is no longer present in that extreme form in the non-orthodox groups, which are the majority, and freedom of thought has grown enormously in the last decades. The debates in Internet organised by the *IARPP*, in which a large number of psychoanalysts from many countries have been able to participate freely, constitute an example of this new situation and show a spectacular change. Moreover, nowadays there is a wide and varied choice of psychoanalytical institutions, a pluralistic context which favours the freedom of learning.

However, I consider that the abuse of arguments of authority – be it Freud or any other great present day theorist – still continues to be a symptom of the remains of authoritarian internal relationships of our psychoanalytical families of belonging. So, within my generation it has been common to grow professionally within a very fragmented psychoanalytical atmosphere, dominated by "aristocratic" leaders who exerted an ideological control or institutional power on their group-territory. This way, the group relationships were woven with the thread of idealisation and the excessive respect towards authority, as if each group had reproduced the genetic characteristics of the first psychoanalytical society. Using a political resemblance, the first society founded by Freud was governed with a monarchical regime, while in the following ones the aristocratic regime has predominated.

I would especially like to show a certain remnants of what could be called the "aristocratic prejudice": the thought that takes for granted how inevitable and natural these institutional structures are, in contrary to other forms of democratic organisation. For this reason, maybe it would be convenient to go back to Freud, who explains explicitly the prejudice in its harshest form. In "Psychology of the masses and analysis of ego", Freud (1921) constructs the origin of social groups basing himself on the theory of a dictatorial leader of a primitive horde, and reduces the democratic alternative into a manifestation of envy:

"Companionship, team spirit, etc., **is unquestionably derived from primitive envy.** Nobody must want to stand out; everybody must be and obtain the same thing. Social justice means that we refuse for ourselves many things so that the others must also renounce them, or, what is the same, they cannot claim them. This demand for equality is the root of social conscience...."

Firstly, one may think that envy is not always regarded as a wish for the other who is envied to become less important. Raphael, the Italian painter, envied the works of Michael Angelo and Leonardo throughout his whole life, an envy which transformed itself into a motivation to exceed himself. Secondly, history shows us many examples where social conscience has helped to increase the rights of the majority, and not only to "refuse many things so that the others must also renounce them". We can deduce that Freud was trapped in a complementary duality: either one opts for being a mediocrity that refuses many things in order to give preference to belonging, or, one chooses the path of a hero, which means he will have to face envious attacks coming from all directions.

On the contrary, now that we don't believe in an immutable human nature and we know that the reality is the product of a social construction, we can fight the remains of "aristocratic prejudice", contrasting with another version of reality: the democratic ideal. For this, I cannot think of anything better than to remember the "nature" of this ideal: the classic Greece of Pericles.

The construction of the Greek democracy was a slow process of many generations, in which privileges were gradually seized from the aristocracy in order for them to be dealt out to the **demos** (etymologically, "the inferior half"). With the exception of women and slaves, who lacked citizens' rights, never in history has there been repeated a time and a place in which such a high level of direct and participational democracy has been practised. And on the contrary to Freud's omens, it didn't end up in mediocrity, but in the complete opposite: a period of maximum splendour of the arts and philosophy.

The sovereign power resided in the "Assembly" composed entirely of all the citizens of Athens. And in order for the executive power to be more efficient, a "Council" of between 400 and 500 Athenians met with regular recurrence. At the same time, justice was also in the hands of the "demos" and only a few cases, those regarding homicides, were sent to the "Areópago", the tribunal

made up exclusively of aristocrats. And most importantly: the citizens who were, for one year, to work in the council or the courts, were elected by a draw. Can we imagine a procedure where more trust is given to the ability and responsibility of the average citizen than this one?

As Forrest points out (1978), a complete and categorical claim to the Greek democratic ideal has been well expressed in the speech Pericles gave in memory and honour of the dead in the first battle of Peloponneso:

"We have a constitution that does not envy the laws of our neighbours; we are more an example for others than imitators. And this constitution, administered for the benefit of many, not for just a few, receives the name of democracy. Our laws give equal rights to all men in their private disputes... merit, not social class, is that which determines the reputation of a person and neither poverty nor the little known person may impede anybody from contributing something good to the city. We govern ourselves freely as much in public as we do in private. We do not get offended nor do we suffer if someone does something that he or she should wish to do... But individual liberty does not imply a lack of government. A respectful fear teaches us to obey the magistrates and the laws...."

"We worry as much about public matters as we do the private ones, people of very different trades judge with aptitude the public matters; certainly we are the only ones who consider that he who does not participate in them, is not someone without ambition, but someone who is useless...."

"To sum up, I declare that the entire city is an example for all Greece, and I believe that any of us can have a complete and maximum flexibility in most aspects... And it was for a city like this one that men considered it worthy to die in battle, so that it wouldn't be taken from them and among all of us who remain it is natural that each one would want to die for it" (Tucidides II, 37-41)

8. FALLIBILITY AND FACILITY OF THE METHOD

Reinforcing our democratic ideal implies having a guide on the horizon that guides us in the direction of progress. To do this, the practical problem is to find a reasonable route, positions of thirdness which liberate us from the complementary duality between radical utopia and absolute disappointment (Magris C., 1999; Pinto J.M. 2005). We find that, on too many occasions, the ideals have turned into motives of conflict. Maybe it would be good to defend with the arms of the Athenian democracy, but the black and white vision of the American government has turned out to be a big mistake, as has the stubbornness of exporting "democracy" to Iraq been a mistake. The philosopher Bernstein analyses this kind of dichotomical thinking in his recent book *The abuse of evil: a logic of the "friend or enemy"* which is convergent with the ideas of Benjamin (2004) about complementary duality.

Bernstein defends the recuperation of the values developed by the pragmatic American philosophers: James, Pierce, Dewey and Holmes. This author reminds us that all of them were big defenders of in depth studies into democracy, at the same time that they fought against dogmatism, as a result of a common social experience: living through the American civil war; an experience which

influenced them decisively when creating a philosophy that transcended the mythicizing of one's own opinions. They believed that ideas are tools to survive in the world and that they totally depended on the concrete human contexts from which they arise: "Ideas are provisional answers to particular situations, their survival does not depend on their immutability but on their adaptability". Bernstein describes "cartesian anxiety" as the intolerance to accept the lack of an absolutely safe and certain point of support. On the contrary, he vindicates the **principle of fallibilism** of pragmatic philosophy, in other words, that one will never be able to have the guarantee that any belief wouldn't need to be checked: the idea of an incorrigible absolute knowledge is a dangerous prejudice. And however, as in the case of Socrates, acceptance of fallibility does not convert these thinkers into sceptics, but into pragmatists.

In parallel to these ideas, I believe that the ability of "using" prejudice is based on the principle of the fallibility of our capacity for thought: in the conception of theories being provisional and revisable.

So, for example, it seemed doubtless that couples with a large age gap couldn't work well as they were based on parasitic unions. The weaker one, putting up for sale his or her youth, would obtain from the stronger one that which he or she should obtain by themselves. Thanks to Penelope, who did not fall into the danger of a symbiotic relationship, I realised how maladjusted my preconceived ideas were. If I observed a couple with an age difference within a social standard, even though they maintained an unbalanced relationship regarding what each one received and gave, I thought in advance that the relationship could be pathological, but maybe viable, as long as these conflicts were able to be solved. However, when, in the couple, there was an age difference beyond what one would call standard, then from the beginning, it seemed unfeasible to me .

Also other prejudices have been dealt with: The idea that thirdness should always be the principle medicine in all situations of *impasse*, the impossibility to legitimise a controlling behaviour that would go beyond the habitual social limits, the resistance to discuss publicly the errors of the analyst himself (although with the obvious protection of his or her privacy) and the authoritarian inertia of some of our psychoanalytical institutions.

The use of prejudices of the therapist requires, as a first step, the destruction of these preconceived ideas, in such a way that the prejudice is transformed into one more version of reality and not into an unquestionable verdict. Once we question whether or not justice is the elaboration of envy in an unquestionable way, then we are free to use this idea in those contexts in which it could be appropriate.

Freud created psychoanalysis thanks to the exploration of territories beyond common sense. He understood the human mind to be a very complex and intricate system of unconscious motivations which contrasted with the rational conception of man of his time.

Now, this natural difficulty in our field of study has been exaggerated a lot for many reasons, and I would like to stress one of them: the tradition of the psychoanalytical institutions, converted into the necessity of burying themselves indefinitely in the thorough study of the best known texts and authors. I understand that this fact has discouraged the creativity of new generations, and constitutes another version of "aristocratic" prejudice. And the natural consequence has been the persistent delay of the creation of new theories, as one was never sure of having dominated the tradition sufficiently, and what is more serious, it was doubted whether or not one had the right to say something new.

In opposition to this atmosphere of learning, I propose the reinstatement of "easiness" and "freshness" with which to encourage creativity among the new generations of psychotherapists. How is it possible that Sancho, a patient of just ten years of age, can draw quicker and more expressively than I can? Don't I have a better technique than him? Simply, he is more creative in that he perceives drawing as something easy and natural. In contrary to him, the ideal of approaching a learnt and respected rule paralyses and withers me.

The analysis of prejudices is also a natural and deliberate way of constructing a theory. We chip away what is superfluous, we model a new shape, we polish it, and finally, we obtain the sculpture of a theory. It is about a more popular and democratic road than the one that sometimes, in our work, we walk along.

As Bottom points out (2000), the Socratic method can be learnt like a cookery recipe: take an idea that interests you; observe a situation where the previous formula does not fit well; and, finally, look for a new synthesis between the prejudice and the exception. There you have it: you have just cooked yourself a new theoretical reformulation.

Maybe for these reasons, my favourite psychoanalysts are Winnicott, Kohut, Bollas, Bettelheim, the intersubjectivists and Mitchell. All of them share a favourable reassessment of common sense. Winnicott puts the providing of the genuine self of the patient before the feeding of patients our theories. Kohut puts empathy in the centre of his theory and technique, a popular quality of putting oneself in the place of others. Bollas (1987) recuperates the value of "the known and unthought known". Bettelheim (1994) views psychotherapy as "the art of the obvious". Stolorow, Atwood and Orange reintroduce the obvious influence of context, and reformulate all the classical concepts in intersubjective terms. And Mitchell (1993) recognises that clinical practice is refined common sense, a constant exercise of trial and error.

If, finally, we destroy this prejudice, the great difficulty in working out theories, and the near impossible task of the therapist, we will become more free to define what the suitable contexts where these ideas can be applied are, and equally recognise the growing complexity of our field (interesting discoveries in neuro-sciences, amazing relationships between mother and baby, fertile relational theories). On the contrary, when we can only take a clear stance on

the pole of the "difficult", we fall, protected and defensive, into the complacent role of "experts". Then we run the risk of blocking up the bidirectionality of the relationship between patient and therapist, or between teacher and student. And in the worst of cases, we can reach two of our most intimate desires: *the patient that never leaves us, and the eternal pupil*.

In conclusion, from a wider perspective, we see that, each time we overcome the unbreakable support towards a fixed idea, we make a **democratizing turn** in psychotherapy, be it in the treatment of a patient, in the construction of a psychoanalytical theory or in the living together within our institutions. Now, to destroy a prejudice is a journey towards the "other", a living the difference. At times, it is about an enjoyable tourist experience, comfortable and enriching, in which ideas are changed naturally through the living together and dialogue with the other. And at other times, learning from the patient, letting the *demos* speak, taking on the role of the opposition, avoiding using the resources of arguments of authority too many times or fighting the prejudice of what is difficult and intricate to theorise, can be a great adventure in which one must put into play the virtue of bravery in the Socratic meaning of the expression: the carrying out of a sensible resistance.

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