

## *Opening*

by Marco Francesconi<sup>1</sup>

I feel that, in the light of today's gathering, it is fair to say that psychoanalysis is taking an ever *broader path*, at least in the sense of geography and intercultural reach and we have, for two reasons, tried to bring all this together under the heading of Geographies of Psychoanalysis. First, we want to continue the intercultural exploration that we began many years ago in Pavia, at times using the infant observation method, and secondly, we also share Lorena Preta's interest in delving deeper into the comparisons between knowledge, cultures and the numerous forms of psychoanalysis practised around the world.

Today's seminar would not have been possible without the support of Pavia's Collegio Ghislieri and the goal is for it to be the first in a series of gatherings in which a broad range of international psychoanalysts and experts from other disciplines explores these questions in greater detail, forming the basis for future work.

*Geografie della Psicoanalisi* - Geographies of Psychoanalysis - is the title of an especially good issue of *Psiche* (2008), a journal edited at the time by Lorena Preta that was even translated and presented at the International Psychoanalytical Association Congress in Beijing (IPA-ASIA, 23-25 October 2010), a clear testimony of the interest in this topic.

Such enthusiasm was especially evident in our working group, which is related to my teaching of dynamic psychology. For over a decade, infant observation seminars have shown students respectful observation procedures for similar and dissimilar settings, learning more about 'natural' families, families of African immigrants, children born through artificial insemination and those that are adopted or raised in orphanages.

Notably, Anna Tabanelli's work, aided by her students, with immigrant African families in Pavia has focused on the typical initial lack of visual and verbal communication between a mother and a newborn, an aspect that is seen as potentially hindering development in our culture, but that seems without any negative consequences for African children. In accordance with other observations (e.g. Maiello, 2002, in South Africa), the unbroken tactile and auditory contact, even in the absence of visual interaction, extends prenatal life where, as the author recalled, "*communication with the maternal environment occurs mostly through the fetus' sense of touch and hearing*". This idea is

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer in Dynamic Psychology, Psychology Degree, University of Pavia, member of the Association of Psychoanalytical Studies (Milan).

clearly expressed by the Xhosa word *mdlezana*, which means *mother-and-child in their union and togetherness*, both contained in the psycho-physical state of undifferentiation.

We are currently looking into our department (along with Vanna Berlincioni) working with the University of Dakar, in Senegal, to explore the possibility of *in loco* observation and training.

The following are with us today to discuss the theme:

Lorena Preta, a member of the Italian Psychoanalytical Society (SPI), editor of *Psiche* from 2001 to 2009, organiser of the Spoleto International Science Festival, an event recorded in various books. She will provide a more detailed introduction to the work we will be doing.

Fausto Petrella, a member of SPI with responsibilities for training, Professor of Psychiatry from 1981 to 2008, President of SPI from 1997 to 2000. As the chair of this meeting, it will be his task to connect and frame the various contributions.

Livio Boni, from the University of Toulouse II Le Miral, is one of the leading experts on psychoanalysis in India and edited *L'Inde de la psychanalyse. Le sous-continent de l'Inconscient*. He is a genuine authority on the Indian vision of psychoanalysis, both seen through a historical lens - India was the first psychoanalytical society outside of the Western world, in 1922 - and in relation to the intersections with the theoretical Freudian sphere. He will be engaged in a dialogue with Daniela Scotto di Fasano, a member of SPI and, in the past, a member of the editorial teams for *Psiche* and *Spiweb*.

Fethi Benslama, member of the Association Psychanalytique Marocaine, will provide us with details of psychoanalytic meta-psychology in the light of his "double sense of belonging" as a person of Muslim culture and a resident in France. His thinking revisits the question of Oedipus, the role of the father and the centrality of removing the feminine to create a "religion of the son" through the perspective of the *original rejection* of Abraham's son, Ishmael and his mother, Hagar. He explores these ideas right down to the almost redemptive placement of Muhammad, a parentless figure who is both combative and reparative at the same time. It is an intra-psychoic and cultural combination that clearly provides us with food for thought.

He will engage in dialogue with Maurizio Balsamo, a member of SPI with responsibilities for training, a lecturer in psychopathology and psychoanalysis at Paris Diderot University, editor-in-chief of *Psiche* from 2001 to 2009, and author and editor of numerous publications.

Finally, Gohar Homayounpour of the Tehran Psychoanalytic Institute will take us into the world of real clinical experience - as set out in *Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran* - but where free association is far from easy. It is a world in which even aspects that are normally taken for granted, like the setting - speaking face-to-face or the use of the couch - are anything but questions with a

simple answer. She will be in dialogue with Vanna Berlincioni, a member of SPI who lectures in ethno-psychiatry as part of the specialisation in psychiatry course.

I'd like to conclude my introductory remarks by focusing briefly on the question of conflict, which brings to mind the foundational process for Freudian thinking. It would seem that, in psychoanalytic theory, the method for managing conflict has changed over time.

Freud invented a process 'to go back in time', seeking the sexuality in the child, breaking away from the dominant cultural model of the time and, thus, seeking a 'foreign' part of the adult. Yet, he stopped when he came to a point that was 'too far back', an 'original' dimension. Freud goes back to Oedipus where the conflict could be described as that of a 'little man' or a 'little woman' caught up in a triangle with adults. But he stops there, even though there is a sense of something 'pre-Oedipal', as can be seen in his statements about, say, the *Minoan-Miocene age*. Freud favours entering the conflict, but he doesn't go any further, leaving others to delve more deeply.

It was this part, about origins, that Freud left untouched, repressed and only sensed, and it became a point of heated controversy between Freud's daughter and Melanie Klein. The latter plunged into the pregenital age, passionately and impetuously exploring an unknown continent that led her to believe the ego is found from the beginning of a baby's life. But this brought her into conflict with Anna Freud, who had become a spokesperson for the part of Freudian thinking that did not go so far back. For her, the ego could only be a strong, coherent and organised structure... Conflict - and the conflict was very real between these two great women - can be seen as a metaphor for the transition to act when the conflict is the source of suffering that can neither be removed nor otherwise dealt with. This is quite far from Bion's notion where conflict is turned back into fertile, productive, constructive ground. I believe that this is the real cultural development of psychoanalytical epistemological models, where conflict moves away from destruction to become something that can create. It has attained a truly post-Oedipal dimension where the triangulation means the third party can disappear and conflict takes on a different form. We know, though, that this is far from easy and we often see the elements of failure and pathology or, in the borderland between pathology and collective sublimation, such elements manage to become part of social movements that can be amazingly broad and complex. As I'm fairly sure Livio Boni will show us in his contribution on Gandhi, an ascetic Gandhi who mortifies his body and seeks to 'remove' the masculine from his body, rather than to identify with the feminine, would seem to evoke the yearning for a kind of omnipotence or totipotency that brings us back to Lorena Preta's work on transgender people.

Let me go back to Bion and the two-way arrows between mental functions and states, the oscillation between two poles. Is it possible to see a complementary and fertile dualism to contrast

with fusion/totipotency? Interaction/integration. This is an oft debated issue and one that is very evident today, at a time when undifferentiation and the difficulty in keeping open the oscillation between different vertices or possibilities is something we increasingly come across in our practice and in society.

So, I'd like to thank all those who will speak and take part for being willing to be here and for making the effort to ensure the *analytical mirror* will not be a *paranoid mirror* designed solely to find the defect in the other to attack it, nor a *narcissistic mirror* meant simply to see oneself better. I hope it will be a *mirror for relations and object-relations* to enable one to better understand oneself or one's horizons as one comes into contact with the outside world. This is just like one of those mirrors on a street corner or a quick look in the mirror before leaving home.