

Cartographies of Psychoanalysis

by Lorena Preta

Psychoanalysis is clearly at a crucial and seemingly contradictory point. On the one hand, it has to increasingly engage with pharmacological treatments and psychological techniques that are far removed from psychoanalysis; on the other hand, it is expanding in countries where, until recently, psychoanalysis was marginalised. In recent years, Asian and Muslim countries have started to see psychoanalysis as culturally important and a key form of therapy. So, it is a crisis and growth at the same time.

While psychoanalytical theory is hefty and spread over time, it remains dynamic and developing. It needs other theories and new experiences - a process that is essential for all forms of knowledge - to grow and survive. I feel that when it comes to putting into practice psychoanalytical concepts and actual therapy, the focus should not really be on the long-standing question of how scientific psychoanalysis is nor should it be about the internal debate on the various models, but rather on the issues that are raised when different cultures come into contact. It is no longer simply a question of debate with other disciplines (this has always been the beating heart of *Psiche*), but also about comparing different anthropological positions. These are what can truly question psychoanalysis and see if its ideas and concepts are universal or generally "of use", and if its methods can help alleviate psychological suffering in different countries around the world.

In the leader for the *Geographies of Psychoanalysis* edition of *Psiche*, I asked what would happen today if Freud and Jung were to take the trip they took way back in 1909 to the United States, when the founder of psychoanalysis famously said, "They don't realise that we are bringing them the plague!" Does psychoanalysis still have that same disruptive power? Can it still subvert the traditional view of man, toppling him from his throne of false certainties and omnipotence into a world in which he is limited and contradictory?

The questions psychoanalysis has to face today are undoubtedly more complex than those in the past. The modern world is dominated by technology that subverts the perception of the body, by a new family and group organisation that enforces a changed *geometry of the mind* and by global violence. The answers to these new situations differ from country to country regardless of the uniformity brought by globalisation. Consequently, the responses and role of psychoanalysis change across different nations.

In the West, we are seeing a crisis where the self is disoriented and fragmented, meaning psychoanalysis needs to recompose this self. Individuals are seeking to engage with their communities once more to find not only individual, but collective meaning. By contrast, in the East, oppression by totalitarian regimes is widespread, suffocating individualism while religious forces demand strict behaviour that might not even be derived from the original religious principles. In such countries, the goal is emancipation from group control to find space for individual freedom. Gohar Homayounpour opposes the "unbearable lightness of being" in the West with the unbearable weight of eastern experience.

Is psychoanalysis able to meet these differing needs while remaining true to its roots of free and unbiased investigation? And can it do this without forgoing its method and the specific elements it has built up over the years? How can psychoanalysis engage with the wealth of experience and knowledge that distant cultures and different religions have developed down the centuries and that remain fundamental today since they still feed specific visions of mankind and the world? How can psychoanalysis handle the thinking, beliefs and conduct found in these different countries?

Is it a question of "translation", as proposed by Fethi Benslama? Is it a need to deconstruct the dominant readings of these phenomena, as Livio Boni suggests?

The birth of psychoanalysis was heavily characterised by its founder's 'spirit of the age', and within the culture of that time Freud made some very clear choices about his hypotheses and the fields in which he worked. He used myths from one tradition rather than another, as with the myth of the Sphinx from the Greek tradition that was so central to the Oedipus constellation. He also used historical interpretations that were at odds with the tradition, such as the Egyptian origins of Moses. As always happens in scientific creation and even in general thinking, he used both existing cultural material from his time and his own personal, innovative solutions.

This characterisation does not prevent psychoanalysis from spreading his underlying hypotheses in cultures that have vastly different anthropological roots, such as Eastern cultures.

It could be said that to describe the thousands of levels of our time, made up of a grid of thoughts, cultures, knowledge and community relations, should not be about providing proven maps of knowledge, but attempts at "mapping even realms that are yet to come", seeking to be in harmony with what is to come, to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari.

I hope today marks the beginning of work along such a path and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who agreed to come and join in the discussion today, especially with a view to future analysis and investigation.

