

Conclusions

by Lorena Preta

Having listened to what has been said, it seems we need to avoid a stereotyped vision of the East and the West in which they are seen as direct, entrenched opposites as this overlooks the shared origins and, in parallel, the numerous, different destinies caused by historical events.

As Silvia Ronchey has reminded us, we tend to reduce conflict to simplistic, dualistic opposition and "to exorcise the complexity of conflicts between ethnic groups, the transversal nature of front lines, the multiplicity and complexity of oppositions". Yet, it is by giving sufficient consideration to history, which is filled with contradictions and intersecting reasons, that we can give new depth and importance to the conflicted hardships that characterise human existence. In the West, it is the way our minds are organised that drives us to see the relationship between East and West as a "single, head-on collision" and that leads us "to exorcise this seismic swarm of conflict, this constant and asymmetrical drawing of new fault lines of friction". As Silvia Ronchey suggests, we need both a vertical and criss-crossed vision of history designed to ensure events constantly re-emerge, such that events are not connected in a deterministic manner, but are able to create in a broader sense.

In psychoanalytic terms, the individual psyche lives in constant anachronism that makes experience of life irretrievably out of phase with the events in one's personal history. In our psyche, time is helical with past and present intersecting and overlapping, ensuring not only that our history is constantly in our present but also that new meaning is continually being assigned to the past and transforming the sense of our feelings and actions, providing a broader and more profound perspective. Continuity and change are the fictitious poles that we assume from time to time to be able to connect to what came before and recreate meaning or to face what is new, seemingly freed of a predetermined destiny. These are knowledge strategies that take into account the complex structure of life, allowing those transformations that not only guarantee survival but also creativity.

The two poles also reflect the oscillation between a depressive state in which the possibility to process internal experience is condensed and moments of fragmentation and paranoid breaks, with both necessary for the development of mental life.

In social terms, the consideration of the continuity of history or the exaltation of the moments of rupture find reflection in the myths underlying the various cultures, scientific theories and religions.

As Giancarlo Bosetti stressed, it is necessary to change the perspective in which differences are interpreted, at times intentionally taking local or 'parochial' positions (given one's own perspective and culture), and at other times, reconquering the need for universal meaning that goes beyond any specific country or history. All too often, we see countries as 'backward' when they adopt practices and visions of mankind that are similar to those we held until relatively recently. Likewise, we see moving beyond these as 'advancement', on the basis of a world view in which historical development is catalogued as progress. Yet, the approach to different cultures must place importance on "understanding the structure, the hierarchy of values, the functioning, partly to change what appears indefensible because it violates human dignity". This enables the critical analysis of cultures to become a 'pluralist gym'.

This is quite an alluring invitation for psychoanalysis as it is currently driven by new contact with the outside world and the consequent changes in concepts and clinical practice. Such ruptures might not be those referred to in history and past politics, but they definitely require new and substantial debate about the vision of mankind.

At the start of this gathering, Tiziana Bastianini asked which subject we were talking about when dealing with a psychoanalytical definition. What is the line that separates or, better, helps to define individualism versus the collective, the community? "We need to explore the various devices in the different cultures that enable us to reach the forms of the psychic produced in them". She also wondered whether the elements that characterise it in each culture might be, for example, emotions in all senses, including their neuro-physiological substrate.

As Gohar Homayoumpour reminded us in speaking about the basic emotions that we all share, we can build around them a deeper and more precise understanding of these experiences, regardless of the cultural expressions that shaped them. Above all, I believe, we can recover the practical side of therapy, which, by freeing itself from the intricacies of the different manifestations and languages, can turn unease into a transformational act and, consequently, bring its profound meaning to the fore.

For psychoanalysis to be able to do this today, there is a need to come to terms with

the different anthropological visions and, at the same time, these visions need to be made dynamic and decoupled from within to allow out the plurality of meanings that are so often bridled, entangled or frozen in the customs of tradition.