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Analogue communication in generating and developing Family Therapy

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The Athenian Institute of Anthropos was conceptualized and planned to operate along systemic lines, being a center for research, training and applications in the sciences of Anthropos — a Living System itself.

Following Heraclitus we conceptualize phenomena as processes and influenced by the General System theory we view Anthropos as a biopsychosocial system, the outcome of the transaction (mutual alteration) of biological, psychosocial, sociocultural and socioeconomic processes — these being the processes with the highest complexity (1).

The socioeconomic processes within the human context, concern the following:

a) The prevailing modalities applied by Anthropos for creating and producing; and b) The complex interrelational network which Anthropos structure by following these modalities. This network is also necessary for the exchange of output resulting from creating and producing. It follows that these economicosocial processes, at any point of the time-space continuum, play a fundamental role in maintaining, differentiating, and morphogenetically developing the increasingly complex suprasystems of Anthropos, — the family being the immediate suprasystem.

Antagonistic directions of these processes are bound to introduce antagonistic directions in the transaction of all other processes, leading to disorganized complexity.

The psychosocial process is integral in its oneness. The description of phenomena as interpersonal or intrapersonal is a function of the position of the observer.

«Anthropos» and «family member» are two aspects of the same process. By participating in an anotropic Family transaction, Anthropos develops an increasingly organized complexity and differentiation which both his own and his family's morphogenetic development require.

Anthropos and the family process will either spiral to increasingly organized complexity, differentiation or, when *stasis* prevails, will be lead to disorganized complexity with entropic manifestations: malfunctioning in various forms.

The vital condition for the anotropic development of the transaction which will lead Anthropos and his suprasystems to an increasingly organized complexity, is the maintainance of organization in openness and openness in organization. In other words, the continuation of structuring while boundaries are opening and the preservation of opening while structuring proceed.

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The further development of these theoretical views and the development of applications which have generated further theoretical developments, enabled us to contribute in the seventies to the development of the Autonomy Paradigm of GST (2).

Anthropos, according to the Autonomy Paradigm, as a Living System alternately develops opening and closing of boundaries. The opening and closing operation working in complementarity «generate operational configurations which achieve the function of wholeness, self-regulation, and progressive self-transformation» (J. E. Durkin).

Opening and closing are therefore the boundary functions which are critical for the achievement of Autonomy, and the timing of their alteration is of the most crucial importance.

Analogic communication, which we know to be based on symbols, images, poetic analogues, metaphors and parables generates emotions. This flow of emotions open the boundaries. Intuitive understandings follow.

Closing of boundaries is generated and completed by analytic thinking, which, as we know, enables Anthropos to describe and explain the perceived environment in an orderly, rational, consistent way, following grammar, syntax and semantics (3). The result of this dialectic is cognitive emotional integration.

Consistent with the above, in our work for the development of applications for group techniques, including family therapy, we have actualized forms of analogic communication in order to Catalyze-Regulate therapeutic intervention at its *optimum*.

In order to offer opportunities to open up and assimilate whatever information they are able to actualize at this point, both quantity and quality-wise, we use different forms of analogic communication in different combinations.

Catalyzing-Regulating therapeutic transaction along analytic lines, offers the opportunity for the more differentiated restructuring of boundaries. Functioning is improved.

We will attempt to illustrate instances of the application of Analogic Communication in our work with families.

The joint family drawing is one of the family tasks we use. All family members are invited to draw with the colors of their choice «anything they want to» in the same piece of paper (45×50). The paper is placed on an easel. Magic markers are used for drawing.

Family members are then invited to ask each other anything they want to concerning the items drawn. Then, they are invited to compose a story connecting in some way all the items drawn by them. This is found to facilitate the expression of emotional themes prevailing in the family. These themes are expressed symbolically and allegorically. They are revealed to the degree of awareness which could be, at the moment, optimally actualized for anotropic, morphogenetic developments.

For example Family L. asked for help because, as mother reported, all three brothers, Costas, sixteen y.o., Andreas, fourteen y.o. and Johnny nine y.o. were constantly quarrelling and fighting at home.

During the joint family drawing, in the central part of the paper mother drew a «modern, beautiful» house. This house was not grounded on anything.

Father, drew a smaller house, one fourth the size of mother's house with its chimney smoking. He designed a road leading to the door of the house and a cypress tree on its side. He left both house and tree «ungrounded».

Andreas, drew the profile of a motorcycle. With a simple line he suggested the ground on which the motorcycle was standing. Then, he drew the head of a boy smoking a cigarette.

Costas, drew a similar bodyless head on the clouds and within the contour of clouds added some music notes.

Johnny then, got really busy in drawing a big car in the air, under mother's house, emitting thick smoke. Under the car, Johnny drew a flying helicopter and under it a man falling in the vacuum with a parachute. Johnny, drawing these objects, made it obvious with his attitude that he was doing «monkey business» and triggered a constant giggling from his brothers.

When the family was invited to structure a story connecting all painted items the boys failed to compose anything meaningful.

The therapist then, said to the three brothers:

«If you make a joint effort you may find a way to make the drawing more consistent with reality and meaningful». A task given to the three boys to offer them an opportunity to function as a sibling subgroup.

Johnny got up, grabbed a yellow marker and drew at the base of all other drawings, at the very bottom of the paper a yellow straight horizontal line. His brothers, using then Johnny's line as ground drew pillars, four times taller than mother's house and pillars the size of father's house to support their parents' structures but in this way parents' houses were left to stand on pillars standing on Johnny's yellow line which reminded send to the others.

All family members remained silent for a prolonged period of time. Then father offered the following story:

«The story I will tell comes from the drawing as it finally became, not as each one started it... but as it developed...

Once upon a time there were two houses. A big house and a low house. The big house and the low tried... making a little cypress tree... which is the union of the earth with man... to unite the two houses...

But there was *the* difference... On the one hand in the prehistory of the one house which was tall and big and beautiful and close to the sun and the other low, poorer, with windows to the big road. Finally the cypress tree came out (grew) the two houses united. It continued this one house to continue going high towards the sun. Seeing it, the small house said "Where are you going. Don't you see that you are creating wooden legs and you will fall down?" The low house warned the other house... It said "Watch out, land on the ground, concentrate..." But... the small house too was taken in... out of love for the big house it also tried to reach high to achieve a happy medium.»

But seeing and been aware that *he* also puts on wooden legs... however, he did not elevate itself higher than the cypress tree, but stayed a bit below the cypress tree... and as he stayed like this... now of course... its road, its smoke did not elevate above the cypress tree... and the wooden legs are as small as short as possible.

Now from then on, as time went by, those houses felled up by our epoch, the people, the goods, the technology... the cars, the motorcycles, the music. Which however, as we see pass almost unperceived from those two houses. Nothing. «Words flying away». The houses despite their limb legs have some stability. The car is fading away, the helicopter is fading away, the parachutist is fading away, that is... he withstand much longer. The motorcycle, which is not parked, runs fast and this is the most dangerous part: first the fact that there is no person on it... and then that the cut off head looks away.

So this motorcycle driver is a mistake in all this story... Neither the music notes hanging in the air, — the whole family is «in the air» — nor the dreams so to say of the limousine and the car.

The loud thing is the motorcycle with the out off head looking away... This is the mistake.

In this drawing finally the houses survive more or less the clouds will go, the notes will ground themselves, the cars...

The one who has the exclusiveness... if he will not put the head on a person so the person will sit on the motorcycle... the whole story is a *mistake*. This is what I see as a story.

To derive imports from a story deprives it from the richness and the depth of the analogic communication. However, some structuring becomes necessary for the therapeutic team to exchange understanding and plan interventions.

We are fully aware that this is an approximation to the message sent by the Family Message sent by the Family. An approximation which will always gain from a dialogue.

These are the imports of Father's story:

I will tell the story of the Family as it emerges from the process of transaction of its members across time, not according to what each contributed at the beginning.

Two members started, the one with high social status and the other with low. They tried to creat something new, a third entity, product of their union.

There was, however, this difference in status. The one socially high and close to the source of life, the other of humble origin but with small opening towards the big road of life.

And while they united, the one member continued moving away higher and higher in search of life. The other was seeing this and tried to warn the first member: «Don't you see that the way you behave you are forced more and more to stand on false pretense? Watch out, ground yourself, concentrate on what important.

However, the second part «out of love» followed in the same direction and was forced to resort to the same «false pretense» in order to preserve the union (to avoid drifting apart).

Being a bit more aware he made sure to always remain within (the context determined by) the relationship. This is why his false pretense is quantitatively less.

From then on, as time went by, our epoch «to have», mentality, consumerism and technology flooded everything.

The presence of children, mist. Now the children are fading away. There is a loud message however. Things are moving fast and with nobody

directing developments. Whatever potential of «minding» exists in the family remains unused since the attention of the family is directed elsewhere.

The problem concerns everybody. It is not anybody's personal problem.

The mistake is obvious. The family is not directed (driven) by anybody. And if the one in charge does not intervene to restore responsible guiding then everything will be a mistake. This is what I think.

This fragment of the diagnostic session with Family L. illustrated we hope, that the joint family drawing and the story about it communicated analogically intuitive understanding of the family regarding basic emotional themes which could never be expressed through verbal complains and descriptions of difficulties and problems.

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