

**The destiny of the subjectivity
and life of relationship
in the globalized financial economic device**

*Valentina Lo Mauro, Giuseppe Ruvolo, Gabriele Profita
Dipartimento di Psicologia - Università degli Studi di Palermo*

*The presentation of this work is delegated to Giovanna Cantarella

**The destiny of the subjectivity and life of relationship in the
globalized financial economic device**

This contribution invites to reflect on how the quality of the life of relations and the inter-subjective connectedness are represented in the social contemporary world. One of the characterizing cultural phenomena influencing contemporary reality is made up by the dominant and pervasive presence of the logic and language of the financial markets in policies and activities that organize and articulate daily life.

The prevailing characteristic of these socio-cultural phenomena is that of being already largely approved, being transverse and independent from local cultural identities on which it inevitably weighs and so causing intense modifications in individual and collective lifestyles. These cultural phenomena, unstoppable yet, orientates and influences the quality of everybody's life and the encountering between groups, people and collectives; it commands the form of exchange and relations.

According to Marcel Mauss's anthropological studies on the gift, through many social scientists until today, it is possible to come up with two fundamental paradigms: one that describes the gift as a form of exchange, able to establish lasting relations and processes of recognition, debt and solidarity between men; and one that originates from the free market where debt is canceled through the exchange of money and economical financial transactions that encourages utilitarian and impersonal relations. In our daily life reality both models of exchange coexist in various forms and it is not always easy to distinguish them in concrete situations.

Theoretical hypothesis

Currently the economical and financial system strongly determines what men are, or have become as well as their way of being-in-relation. This system, through institutions and working organizations, governs the relational life, including the family one, and has redefined the meaning and significance of bonds, penetrating into the innermost structure of personality.

Theoretical hypothesis that drives our research is that the structures of subjectivity, the meaning and the way of being in a relation are characteristics (cultural themes) that emerge within a defined cultural and historical system (dispositif).

We will try to follow a less “naturalistic” approach and instead using a more anthropological and historical one. In such a theoretical perspective, the cultural themes (i.e., values, life ideals, economy, market, gift and other) have the role of directing the understanding of how men are more subject from external cultural dimensions rather than the internal drives. These cultural themes are incorporated or interiorized by men belonging a shared cultural system and so became elements of the shared subjectivity and of the meanings given to intersubjective exchanges and bonds.

When not understanding the relation that fluctuates between internal and external world, one risks to focus everything on a presumed individual fragility without considering pressure from the external world and considering the latter as inevitable, data and non modifiable.

The analysis of cultural phenomena therefore requires to go beyond the traditional theoretical psychoanalytic frame and its methods. It requires the construction and experimentation of trans-cultural (or cross-cultural) clinical settings able to connect intra psychic, intra cultural and social phenomena.

Workshop setting and methodological issues

The aim of Workshop EATGA (European Association for Transcultural Group-Analysis) 2011, was to analyze cultural phenomena specific of contemporaneity and their effects on bonds, on personal and collective identity.

In order to achieve this goal, it was structured a work setting in small and large groups, which were conducted in a non-directive way and without suggesting a specific national language. The group sessions were preceded by an introductory part, which had the primary objective to offer evocative and representative images of the cultural theme at the centre of the workshop.

The themes proposed are:

- scenes from the movie “Up in the Air”, which exemplifies the impersonality of work relations and the unnecessary and the trivial nature of bonds, group belonging, and personal history within the economic logics that overrule the working today;

- a suggestion on the economical-financial paradigm, by citing Luciano Gallino’s work which outlines the individualistic and utilitarian nature of the economical-financial system, and emphasizes the strength exercised by neoliberal culture to determine and build up

the “economic man”. The author writes: “humans are immersed in the social and cultural institutions – school and market, production and consumption, media and entertainment, government and politics – which intensively operate as if everyone was an economic man.” (Gallino 2011, p. 140).

- the core exposure of the gift paradigm as theorized by Marcel Mauss (1994), with particular reference to the relation among giving-receiving-exchanging. The gift builds relationships and bonds of solidarity and reciprocity.

Workshop processes and reflections on the experience

The introduction of cultural theme is a change in the traditional analytical setting because:

- it directs the exploration of actual cultural phenomena, rather than events placed in the history and sedimented in individual and collective memory;
- it binds to contextualize and interpret workshop processes; it requires, especially from the staff, the passage from an analytic interpretative position “without memory and desire” to a position in which the sense of the experience is constructed with reference to the cultural theme highlighted in the introduction.

Our reflection on these two points starts from three main issues that characterized the work of the groups during the workshop: the specific groups phenomena, the dreams, and the conduction modalities.

The analysis of the specific group phenomena related to the introduction of the cultural theme.

The group phenomena concern a massive utilization of intellectualization, of rationalization, and the significant use of dreams.

We think that proposing the cultural theme has activated deep anguish of identity annihilation, not only related to small and large group dynamics.

According to George Devereux (1980), we think that intellectualization is the most useful defense mechanism to restore an emotional distance, in front of themes and experiences that perturb the cultural codes that define personal identity. The anguish is deposited in the dreams that become real places of contact with the emotions of disorientation and loss of his/her own identity.

The dream: One of the possible interpretative reading of the workshop of Palermo.

In a dream, a participant moves closer to the till of a bar to pay for something probably consumed, but the cashier cuts his hand and the participant-customer thinks that she acted on behalf of Mafia.

During the work session there is an associative chain which concerns the trust; in particular, a participant emphatically wonders: “In whom can I trust?”. And the group answers “in no one!”.

The dream connects two meanings: the payment and the mafia's system, as if it should propose two opposing perspectives on the theme of bonds:

the first one is the economical (or market), which is legal and in which there is an equal exchange, so a price in money is paid in exchange for consumption or service, but it does not create the bond, it does not create any relation between the cashier and the customer; after the payment, the interaction is dissolved because there is no outstanding debt;

the second one is illegal, criminal, in which there is no equivalence and both violence and power's bonds are generated.

The hand cutting seems to show that the law of the Mafia prevails.

The M

mafia's law considers the act of paying as a form of submission, thus this law creates a bond of dependence that binds and obliges people. The hand cutting inhibits the economical/market exchange, with its logic of autonomy and resolution of the bond.

The dichotomy Market/Mafia shows that there are only two possible representations of the exchange:

- the Mafia relationship which looks as both a poisoned and perverse gift, and which creates an abuse of power;
- the Market logic in which the exchange and the relationship between two subjects resolves and concludes by making payment.

The logic of the gift, in which the debt is constituted of both gratitude and bond, is excluded from representation and thought.

The theme of trust

The theme of trust seems to be connected with these meanings: if you cannot trust anyone, every gift seems poisoned, it contains a trap that leads to logics of illegality and instrumentality, which, in terms of the local culture, refers to Mafia.

When trust does not circulate, the market exchange allows pacifying relationships. All economic theories, from Adam Smith onwards, are based on the economical individualism of appropriation, that postulates the lack of trust as a fact of nature: everyone "naturally" tries to get something for himself/herself to the detriment of others, so the payment is the best way to avoid conflicts.

The contact in the exchange is seen as extremely risky. Money makes possible an idea of fairness, which does not entail trust: giving trust is risky, but it is even riskier if what we have internalized is the culture of economical individualism of appropriation.

During the Workshop, the cultural theme showed the gift as anthropological organizer of both the bonds and the relation of thankfulness, having assumed the value of a scandal. The latter triggers off "troublesome contents" of which is embarrassing to speak (Bion).

The cultural theme provokes scandal because makes visible the critical of encountering the other, and underlines the conflict between the distance, emphasized by market logic which asks for free subjects always ready to new relations, and the personal implication in relationships and relational bonds.

The analytical position and the transformations of the psychoanalytic and group-analytic settings.

This matter poses the theme of the articulation between the individual and the social levels again. This theme is showed in the interaction here and now, and reflects the social and cultural dimensions. There is a part of the unconscious that is not connected to individual refolement, but simply does not fall within the individual and collective perception.

Jankélévich (1980) defined this cultural dimension as *méconnaissance*, by whom “we think to know what, as a matter of fact, we don’t know at all”. We know the cultural system in which we live, but it is possible to understand the cultural dimension of personal and collective identity only through the difference, when we come into contact with identities belonging to different cultural systems.

In our opinion, the most insidious form of *méconnaissance* concerns the invisibility of the relapses of the social level on the individual behaviors and feelings, which is exclusively interpreted in terms of intra-psychic conflicts.

However, this kind of invisibility has concrete and visible character in the phenomena that it produces. The ways by which this phenomena are thought and understood reply its invisibility.

The introduction of the cultural theme has represented, in our opinion, a scandal also for the conductors of the groups because it binds them to operations of contextualization and interpretation of the group processes. This implies the passage from an interpretative analytical position “without memory and without desire” to a position in which the sense of the experience is built beginning from the relationship that is unfolded inside the same setting and in function of highlighted theme.

During the workshop, the staff only partly was mentally focalized to the theme. The claim for a neutral and abstinent analytical position describes the difficulty, in our opinion, to recognize and to be aware of being crossed by the same transpersonal meanings of the participants.

The comparison with the cultural theme of the exchange and the bond discloses the personal implication of oneself, and forces to assume a critical position on the phenomena that is observed: it is not possible to do it from “no position”. What humans are, both in an individual and collective sense, does not simply depend on a father, a mother or a family genealogy, but it is connected with a historical-cultural device that crosses and organizes them and all the devices (according to Foucault, cited in Deleuze, 1989) that we cross and that leave a mark in us.

Conclusions

From the workshop experience emerges the role of economical-financial system in promoting codes and symbols that define the shape and the sense of the relations. Both the Market and the Gift have always been, with various and alternate historical vicissitudes, two

important cultural organizers of the groups and the communities; both have represented the cultural organizers of the relationships, and of the relationships among all people.

Today, we assist to the hegemony of the Market and the marginalization of the Gift in bordering human experiences. The cultural codes of the market have gone out from the economic circle in which they were born and they are offered as univocal organizers of the affections, of the relationships and of the human existence.

From the group processes, emerges the strength with which such cultural model is able to block the access to a dimension of the gift. The affirmation for which trust cannot be given describes the adherence to a model of relationship and exchanges in which there isn't the possibility of the recognition of the other, of the thankfulness and of the need to reciprocate. As if the system of the exchanges and the relationships could have only the coordinates of the utility, of the individualism, of the appropriation. Other coordinates of meanings and other declinations of the exchange are precluded (forcluded) from the thought and from the action.

The gift paradigm can be assumed only in its deformed, illegal and perverse value. The reference to the Mafia describes, in fact, the emotions of submission, of power and of deception.

This is an evidence for the critical actual historical moment, in which seem to be interdicted the values and the cultural codes organized on the trust, on the reciprocity, on the common share and participation. But really from this evidence, we are solicited to start a continuous research on the theoretical and technical changes of clinical settings and on their value in visualizing and possibly transforming the sorrowful drifts of the contemporaneity.

Bibliography

Deleuze, G. (1989), *Che cos'è un dispositivo*. Tr. It. Cronopio, Napoli, 2010.

Devereux, G. (1980), *De l'angoisse à la méthode dans le sciences du comportement*, Flammarion, Paris, (ed or. 1967).

Gallino, L. (2011), *Finanzcapitalismo. La civiltà del denaro in crisi*. Einaudi, Torino.

Jankélévitch, V. (1957), *Le je-ne-sais-quoi et le presque-rien.*, PUF, Paris, 1980.

Mauss, M. (1950), *Saggio sul dono. Forma e motivo dello scambio nelle società arcaiche*. Tr. It. Einaudi, Torino, 2002.

Profita, G., Ruvolo, G. (2009), *Il Legame e lo scambio*. In *Plexus. Semestrare Scientifico Online del Laboratorio di Gruppoanalisi*, 3, 2009.

Profita, G., Ruvolo, G. (2011), *Psicopatologia dei Legami nel Mondo Interconnesso*. In *Plexus. Semestrare Scientifico Online del Laboratorio di Gruppoanalisi*, 7, 2011.