

Commentary on
"How does analysis work on children"

Myrta Casas de Pereda¹

I wish to thank *Controversias Magazine* for the task entrusted to me as well as express my respect for and recognition of Julio Moreno for the creativity and subtlety of his theoretical-clinical statements. I believe that the written discussion of controversial issues is an important incentive to enrich the exchange of ideas in a respectful and reflective space.

Moreno's initial proposals regarding children and parents form part of the abundant discussions already dedicated to the topic. I understand that it is an important topic and deserves reflection on a conceptual level.

Furthermore, the author considers that "*the link between parents and children is regulated by a discourse*" which he terms "infantile discourse". My understanding is that discourse from a psychoanalytic point of view **does not** regulate links. Rather, it is an inalienable human means, which emanating from and directed towards the child, reveals his manner of relating to the other Other, where the vital meets the symptomatic.

Gestures, games and words are the child's way of calling, contacting and demanding, weaving together language and play. Discourse, then, the subject of rivers of ink from linguistics to pragmatics, philosophy to semiotics, which touch upon distinct aspects of the topic without exhausting it and share limits with psychoanalysis. This is our task, to listen, through discourse, to that which is unknown or unrecognized by the ego.

While Moreno does refer to the Freudian idea regarding the enigma that the other represents for the child, he avoids the structural event that causes the structural disavowal in the infantile fantasy with the presence of the Sexual Theories of Children (Freud 1905). Freud shows this wonderful intuition as developing very early on in human life, given that the small child cannot cope with symbolic castration or death.

Unconscious sexuality, therefore, supportive of the drive and its vicissitudes that commands the course of infantile subjectivity, taking into account developments, obstacles and symptoms.

I do not agree with the author's statement that "*The child is taken to a consultation when the infantile discourse demonstrates difficulties in accommodating newly emerging elements*". It is not a question of difficulties with discourse itself. Rather, it is precisely through this discourse that we can detect the conflictive aspects being played out. The unconscious desire emerges from the fabric of the vicissitudes of the drive, repression playing

¹ Full Member of the Psychoanalytic Association of Uruguay. Rivera 2516 - 11300 Montevideo –
e-mail: mcasaspereda@adinet.com.uy

a key role, and we can see this in each and every manifestation of the unconscious: dreams, lapsus, parapraxis and symptoms. All of these are indicators of the inherent difficulties in the unconscious relationship between parents and their children that account for their symptomatic expression.

Changes in the family as institution, as the author points out, along with crises and social changes have always had an effect on the construction of the subject through the ages and over centuries. However, I do not believe that we can say that said crisis is "*one of the main causes of the failure of discourse*".

We must remember that it was as recent as 1924 that the United Nations recognized children's rights for the first time in the Geneva convention. The child, as a member of society becomes a legally recognized entity in the twentieth century; we can therefore fully agree on the paradigmatic changes the concept of the child has undergone over time. However, in 1905, Freud opens the psychoanalytic floodgates of subjectivity by suggesting the idea of infant sexuality from the beginning wherein the main objective of the oral drive, for instance, is not milk, but rather the drive pleasure of sucking.

The Freudian unconscious with its drives and vicissitudes paves the way for a varied understanding which includes the effect of the social on family life, but is not, however, the only element to keep in mind.

The socio-cultural changes are undeniable and we have considered them on numerous opportunities as the backdrop against which to study the various effects of the vicissitudes of the drive, whether it be *Verleugnung*, *Verdrängung* or *Verwerfung*.

I cannot agree with the main proposal regarding harm in the "infantile discourse" due to changes in the social-parental collective. Humans have always been a product of their era and there have always been parental desires that gave way to healthy outcomes and many others which have been accompanied by pain and insanity. We should not demonize technological advances. Rather, we should use them to enrich ourselves or our descendents; in other words, learn how to use them. Excesses, of course, are always harmful.

Moreno states that the current practices of children are connective. When stated in this manner, I would say that all play is connective in the sense that it involves weaving together, acting out or drawing fantasies, entwining unconscious fantasies that emerge through play. This is particular to infantile discourse; gestures, games, words and drawings that "*combined with one or more constants, form or produce a new constant*" according to Abbagnano's definition of the term "connective" (Dictionary of Philosophy, 1961).

Perhaps it is too much to suggest that "*the neurotic conflict is characteristic of modernity...*".

I also believe that the "family romance" described by Freud, basis for later theories on the symbolic, imaginary and real functions of the father and mother, persist in all children as

a structural necessity. The belief that "parents are kings" is partially established in adolescent fantasies regarding the family romance in which the adolescent, from early on, demands the overthrow of "Parental Power".

Of the three elements that Moreno identifies as "*curative factors*", regarding the first, he states that the analyst can "*restore*" part of the disturbed infantile discourse simply by "*offering to occupy a space that has been left vacant within him*". This suggests a hierarchy, a vacant preestablished structure in which the analyst locates himself, yet which eludes the implicit unconscious desire, requests for help, or unconscious desires to maintain the symptomatic. As well as the temporal with respect to the complexity of unconscious fantasies and desires throughout childhood, where the kaleidoscopic time of the *a posteriori* makes, unmakes and remakes, organizing subjectivity and symptoms.

The author uses the term "*failure of discourse*" as a sign of the symptomatic, which in my understanding is a phenomenic description, given that what we are "listening to" (gestures, games and words) is an effect of the unconscious plot where pathogenic repressions, persistent disavowals or splitting are signs of a suffering subject. These are not failures but symptomatic expressions.

It is not a question, therefore, of "*restoring infantile discourse*", but rather of having an impact on the effects of repression that gave way to symptomatic fantasies or to the symptoms themselves and which manifest themselves in a very dynamic way through the transference link. We offer to occupy not the vacant spaces (given that we could be confronted with situations of psychotic functioning that require recognition from our analytic position) but rather, from the perspective of neurosis or even subjective weaknesses, the damaged bonds in the living story of the transference.

The second curative factor, regarding transference, brings together two separate perspectives: "*the repetition of a cliché with an object other which will correct the parental objects*" and, on the other hand, speaks of the possibility of contact with blocked or poorly evolved issues. That it "*flattens out the past*", in any case, would be to enable different ways of relating to the objects through transference work.

I understand that these two perspectives are not opposites. Rather, both form a whole, part of the fabric that constitutes the analysand. It is at this point that the author proposes two differing, separable positions: "*the immanent and the transcendent*".

I understand that both are inherent to the analytic position, a basic willingness in our training, where we offer ourselves to embody the objects towards which love and hate are directed and which constitute the **transferential acting out**. We play the proposed roles but as a diverse other who can speak from a different (third) place.

Moreno's *immanent position* "*related to that of Bion's and the receptivity of the Freudian unconscious*" is a way of signalling the **recognition** of transference in ourselves.

However, I do not agree with the idea that transference as a playground requires a connection with "*the excluded or infantile aspects of the analyst's psyche*".

I believe that it is misleading to think that the analyst can put himself in touch with his own unconscious, the repressed and systematic unconscious, something with which we have no contact except, with luck, through our own analysis. However we do have the powerful capacity to recognize the effects in ourselves which allows us to situate ourselves in our role as analysts and seek out the difference. We do not use what belongs to our repressed unconscious, but rather what comes and what we privilege in our listening, both preconscious and conscious. We are sensitive to the signifiers that emerge indicating unconscious desires, **the effects of transference on the analyst**.

I understand that we must be cautious in the introduction of elements of philosophy or linguistics given that they need to be approached through psychoanalysis, as opposed to the wholesale and direct transfer of concepts. The definition of immanence that the author suggests from Deleuze ("*a reality that remains closed in on itself, exhausting its entire being and acting*") is at least distanced from the Freudian concept of psychic reality, *Wirklichkeit*, according to which things **effectively** occur, which implies any possibility of effects, *Wirkund*. This leaves us just outside of an inclusive reality, locating us in the variance of each subjectivity.

The author is attempting to distinguish two aspects that come together in us in a dynamic way and to which we must pay attention. The positioning of the analyst is in play; we can be very dedicated in our listening to the unconscious of the patient while at the same time not close ourselves off to the unavoidable creation of a new "third". Therefore, I am not sure that we can talk about a "mutual creation" in a transitional space of increasing complexity because we would be attributing an overly consistent personalized "extra" from the analyst to the analytic function. Our aim is undoubtedly to achieve the emergence of something manifold in the patient, that the patient responds to a new representational or significant articulation, a dynamic rewriting of his symptomatic fantasies, based on the work of the effects of transference on the analyst that always rewrite in a different way, the singularity of the patient's history.

I believe that immanent participation can never be pure because we are aware that the patient is traversed by transference. Nor do I believe that our own infantile aspects are put into play but rather that we can play without that implying that we are children playing. We are adults participating in a children's game and "listening" to the effects that this has.

The impact of the parents' unconscious desire, unknown even to them, but which at the same time defines their subjective structuration, always influences the subjective structuration of their children in multiple ways.

We have a tendency to seek or find a historical truth in transgenerational constructs.

We also know that the unavoidable strength of the *a posteriori* complicates, enriches or destroys illusions of Truth.

However, we can agree on the unquestionable fact that the pathologically repressed or disavowed or split off from parents has an inevitable impact on the conditions necessary for a healthy and singular fantasy-organization of their descendants.

I would say that the silenced always has an effect on unconscious subjectivity and conditions many of the nuances in the structuration of the subjective, in the foundational psychic conflict, always singular. Perhaps an element of this emerges in the sequences of the drawings where we find echoes of the *uncanny*, the ominous, the *Umheimlich* of the family secret.

The "*comic strip between two*" is a partial extension of Winnicott's squiggle but modifies it in an important way. The texts and drawings that the analyst does are perhaps aimed too literally at the unfolding of fantasy. The experiences of the analyst and his own fantasies have too much influence. At one point they appear in the *vignette* where the analyst reveals that he too has a secret in the same way as the child witnesses the secret between his parents. There is a strong tendency towards acts or events where the unknown, anguish, the impossibility of knowing, frustration, anger, or annoyance emerge, which partially turns into faeces or dirtiness, alluding, in this way, to his symptoms of *encopresis*. These are important elements to keep in mind in an intervention, in an interpretation, so as not to avoid Martin's transference with respect to his parental imagos in his analyst.

With respect to the *vignette* related through narration and drawings, while we only see a part of the development of this story, several elements have caught my attention.

On the one hand, I understand that the child is distressed, has soiled himself, is "shit" scared with fear and anger, confronted with what he does not know, while he can intuit that there is something "dirty" and hidden in the parental story. This anguish, this pain and anger, however, which are present in his *encopresis* is not taken by the analyst as a sign of what he suffers or of the anger towards the unknown, or the necessity to ask something more about his story. Rather, it causes him to increase his anger, present through depression. We know that depression implies an inwardly and outwardly directed hate, hate and death.

We do not see the acting out of the transference of this hate. There is someone who is escaping, who is leaving (the drawing) and this could also be a reference to the analyst.

I understand that the analyst makes the mother enter the scene through what he writes on the car that the child draws. The child, feeling too impotent to ask his mother directly, tears up the photo.

The frustration that Martin feels when confronted with the reiteration of the impossibility of knowing appears (does his frustration increase due to the absence of a transference answer?): "*For God's sake! I came all the way here to forget what happened*

with my parents and I see a photo of my mother. I'd better tear it up and move on." I wonder what the impact might be of delving into a secret without the possibility of it being aired between the parents and child, for instance.

The immanent interventions are undoubtedly numerous and reveal the desires of the analyst but not the transference work that the unconscious desires of the patient in transference involves.

The child then asks to be listened to by someone who in reality dismisses him (the pattern) to which he responds by drawing images of a face: sad, injured, broken and depressed. There is another series of what I understand as divergences taking place here.

The analyst fears a suicide fantasy and draws it (at the edge of the sea). The child, however, writes "the sea is beautiful" and is going to go to his house to bathe. We cannot know whether this is a digression or denial of the child. However the sad face reappears in a mirror where the water in the sink includes his symptom. An insistence on being looked at? On having his pain, dirtiness or anger acknowledged? Perhaps when he fails to find this acknowledgment in his analyst, he writes "I'd better go and sleep". He writes a commentary about the water bill on the broken pipe which implies an unproductive or useless cost.

I understand that this is a partial description of what took place in the session and that perhaps the oral interpretations of the analyst are not recounted here, only the drawn and written ones.

The child drew his *encopresis*, his dirtiness, eloquently. He shows the bathroom, the smell that emanates from the body on the bed. He draws his image with insistence, in order to be seen, the allusion to the mirror.

Does the analyst evade the place of the father that the patient is evoking through his drawings? The analyst speaks of the excluding glance of the father when the child draws himself lying down and smelly in order to be recognized and not rejected with his symptom. Is the transference work of the interpretation lacking?

I know that these questions can be answered based on work with the patient, both beforehand and afterwards. This is merely a partial view at a given moment in time chosen by the author to communicate and support his conceptual innovations.

For this reason, this brief reflection is limited to the presented material.

Myrta Casas de Pereda

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ABSTRACT

In her commentary on Julio Moreno's article, the author takes into account the notion of failure in infantile discourse and the idea of the neurotic conflict as being characteristic of modernity and contrasts this with the "family romance", which accounts for changes in the subjective position without relating these to societal changes. She believes that the recuperation of infantile discourse can be explained by the impact of analysis on the effects of the repression. The "immanent position" of Moreno is understood as being the recognition of the transference in the analyst himself, although she does not agree that the analyst can have a connection with his own repressed unconscious. She also believes that the notion of immanence used is fairly distanced from the Freudian vision based on the concept of effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*). Finally, she provides an in-depth analysis of the "comic strip between two", concluding that the analyst's experiences play too much of a role in this technique.

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