

## The First Steps Of A Living<sup>1</sup>

Lic. Nancy Moreno Dueñas

"Every life has its ups and downs, which is like saying its details ... suddenly we feel prisoners of a circumstance that we are not seeking but that sought us... from detail to detail we begin to discover the exterior and the intimacy ... and only then, when we find the boy or the old crock that bears our name, only then the details often become generalities"<sup>2</sup>

Being six years old Santiago comes with her mother, grandmother, uncle, aunts, sisters to my office. In the waiting room I watch the family without knowing, up to then, who they were and what place they occupied in Santiago's life. I see him, at the edge of a chair, looking down and with dark glasses. I come up to them, ask them who are Santiago's parents and the grandmother tells me, pointing across the seat to a young woman with a baby in her arms, *"she is the mother, my daughter."* The mother looks at me and says *"yes, I am."*

Santiago is, still, without moving. I get closer to him, I extend my hand and tell him "Hi Santiago". He doesn't say a word or reacts to my greeting. I lean even more and the grandmother shakes him and tells him to "say hello". The uncle comes closer and takes his hand and put it closer to mine with force. At that very moment I notice that Santiago doesn't see, and when touching my hand he begins to scream and to make very strong noises. He hyperventilates, rocks in his seat, the grandmother shouts to him and the uncle tells me *"Yes, this is what happens, he doesn't see and he doesn't speak and when someone comes closer to him this is how he reacts. We are not from here, it takes us 2 hours to get here, we live in another city, and when coming here, this was his behaviour all the time"*. The rest of the family ignores him and his mother doesn't even look at him.

I propose the mother and Santiago to follow me into the office. The mother with her baby walks into the office, without paying attention to how Santiago is going to do it, the uncle says *"I'll take him"* and guides Santiago, taking his hand, he says

---

<sup>1</sup> New version of the prizewinner work in November, 2011 by the Asociación Psicoanalítica de Buenos Aires with the prize "Familia Faigón" as best clinical work for analysts' training and presented at the II D. W. Winnicott's Conference IUSAM of ApdeBA. December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Benedetti, M. (2007) *Vaiveres en Vivir adrede*, Buenos Aires, Seix Barral.

"Let's go". Without telling him anything else he guides him. The kit tiptoes while he meows louder and louder, then the uncle quickly carries him into the office.

In the office, the mother is already sitting with her baby, the uncle sits Santiago in the other seat and without saying anything he goes away. Santiago swings, hyperventilates and hits his head with his hands. I come closer to him and tell him *"Santiago, you are in my office with your mom who is sitting beside you, at your right, with your sister, your mom has her in her arms, I'm in front of you, your uncle has brought you here because I wanted to meet you and meet your mom; so we can talk for a while "*

As I speak he stops hitting himself, he goes on rocking and emits very low sounds as if he wanted to imitate the sounds of my words. The mother looks at her baby, afterwards she looks at me and says, *"That's what happens, and always has been, he is 6 years old and doesn't say a single word, he says nothing, he emits those noises and gets like this. Many tests of his head have been done and everything was all right, so we were told to bring him here, because he's getting older and, well, it's difficult for all of us."*

I ask her to tell me how Santiago's life has been so far. I asked about his father, and about his blindness: *"I left my house when I was very young (17 years old) to live with a much older man (35 years old), Santiago's father. My family didn't like him and that's why no-one speaks about him and I cannot talk either. I got pregnant and we don't know why he was born blind, the father got along well with him, he played with him, but one day the father was killed, Santiago was only a few months old (2 months) and I was left alone with the child, so I went back to my mother's house. Then I met another man, I got married, and he is the father of my other daughters. I started a family with him and Santiago also lives with us, but he spends almost all day at my mom's because he and the baby are too much for me."*

I ask for Santiago's father death, what was said to the child. Her answer was "no-one speaks about it, he knows it because he has heard he died, but there is no more talking about that, neither here no-one talks, nobody knows what happened.

In what concerns Santiago's games or daily activities, she tells me, *"He does nothing, he doesn't bother, he stays where you leave him; but you can't move him"*

*from the house because he behaves like this. He took the bottle normally, sometimes the father when he was at home (he spent some periods away from home) he played with him, I didn't, it 's really difficult for me to do it. He likes listening to music. During the day we put on the radio, it doesn't matter which station if they broadcast music and he stays there, stuck to music. Right now he has to go to school, and it's strange that he doesn't speak and that's why we begun doing all this, besides he can't go to the bathroom alone yet, he still wears diapers.*

"

### **First sessions**

This is how the first sessions began: Santiago used to arrive an hour or two before, accompanied by his uncle and his grandmother. He came anguished, "meowing" hyperventilating. While waiting the hour of his session he didn't stop "meowing." His family tried to ignore him for a while, until Santiago alone stopped doing it. When the session was about to begin, I came closer to him and greeted him, he got anguished and began hyperventilating, meowing and swinging while beating his chest. Quickly, the uncle took him into the office, put him in the chair and told him he would wait for him in the waiting room.

During the session, because those actions kept happening in the office, I described him what I was doing and how frightened he might be. Apparently because of that and after a while, he managed to calm down.

In the middle of the first session, it occurs to me to begin to applaud softly, and this act catches his attention, he stops rocking to listen carefully my applause, "*Do you like how it sounds?*" Santiago begins to imitate the sound of the applause. This lasts the rest of the session and several more sessions in which the applauses were sometimes stronger, faster, slower, and rhythmic. At the same time, Santiago imitated the sound and I described him how fast, smooth or slow it was each of the applauses. When I stopped applauding, he immediately got anguished and repeated the noise of the last applause he had heard. Trying to bring his ear near to my hands while he kept applauding, but when he realized that I was so near he walked away frightened. I described what he was doing and how scared I felt he was: "*Oh*

*how it frightens me! We almost touch each other, your face really almost touches my hands"*and it was like that, that we continued the game.

After several, similar sessions, when he arrived, shrouded in anguish, I greeted him and I applauded, he heard the applause and immediately calmed down, and in that way we went into the office. Each one seated in his seat, facing each other, Santiago, after the applause, imitated the sound. He didn't do it right away, now it was as if we were holding a conversation in which he also made sounds that I had to respond with applauds.

Sometimes I couldn't understand the anguish he was trying to transmit me and showed it meowling and bumping, though I tried to describe him what I believed was happening to him. He could not calm down, that's why, facing that shared anguish, I said: *"How difficult is for me to understand what is happening to you, you are very anguished and nothing of what I'm telling you helps you, maybe if I close my eyes and I don't see, I may understand you? "*. I do that and begin to describe what I had not noticed before, and tell him, *"Oh what a noise out there, it seems that there are voices in the distance, do you listen? (Santiago begins to diminish his meows, I just hear his heavy breathing). It's like some people speaking, it appears to be from the office next door, you know Santiago?, Yes, this is scary, you don't know those who are talking and what are we hearing as if it were here, because they speak very loud."*

He calms down and continues making sounds that I had to respond with applauds, but this time and during many more sessions, I start them with closed eyes, by making him learn what I'm doing from session to session, noticing and being able to describe him what I haven't perceived before, initially, different voices and smells.

### **Session 16**

In the office, sitting at the table, we began, as we usually did, to communicate with applauds. In a moment he touches my hand and smells it. I describe him what he is doing and after a time in which with fear and care touches my hand and arm, I asked him, *"Do you dare to touch your seat or the table you are sitting up?* He gets anguished and I continue telling him, *"If we touch it both?"* I put my hand next to him and he takes it. Slowly I put our hands near the edge of his seat; when he brushes the seat he starts to cry and hits my hand. I tell him, *"Santiago I know*

*that's scaring, it's different from what you are used to touch, but you are not touching it alone, we're touching it together.*" Again I put my hand next to his and he takes it, touches my arm as if he were looking for something else. I say, *"Sure! How can I ask you to touch the seat with me if you don't know how reliable I am? What if I put both my hands next to you?, So you are not going to be so frightened."* He takes my hands and then we touch the seat.

After describing what he touched, how cold and how hot could it be, then I tell him: *"The table is two steps from here. Do you feel to stand up and touch the table?"*. He hyperventilates and I tell him: *"And if we do it together, maybe breathing like that is not necessary."* He takes my hand, stands up and touches it and immediately starts screaming. He feels very anguished because of that and I feel it, that's why I tell him: *"Quiet Santiago, we are, together, touching this new thing you've found here, it's smooth and besides cool! It's a table and it's very cold! Not like our hands that are warm."* He calms down, smiles and continues touching it. I tell him, *"You can stretch your arms and feel how big it is."* He does it and in the meantime I tell him: *"Santiago you are touching the whole table!"*.

In that discovery he finds play-doh and takes it. *"Oh what's that? It seems that to touch different things surprises you"*. He touches, smells it, he puts it near his face, near his mouth, and I tell him: *"That's play-doh, how it smells, it's soft, it touches your mouth, your face"* I describe him every action he makes with it, as he repeats the sound of the word play-doh. (Since then play-doh is the first object that he manipulated and that accompanied him the rest of the sessions, even when he was away, because it took a bit and brought it back to session)

Thus begins a series of games that in this session start like this: he buries his fingers in it, he divides it in two, holding a bit in each, afterwards he brings them closer, but he doesn't join them, he tries to, but he can't. I bring my hands near to his and them together we join them. This game was repeated during a long time and I keep describing him what he is doing and I recount him his attempts to join and to separate it that he does, using phrases like these, *"Oh, Santiago's fingers are buried into the play-doh... it's going to break ...it's broken! ...In each of Santiago's hands there is a little bit of play-doh! ... What if we join them? ... we are joining them,they are already joined!"*

In later sessions the game is changing until one day he takes the play-doh, he handles it a while and then he throws it to the ground, I pick it up and handle it to him and so starts another game: Santiago plays with his play-doh, he throws it to the ground, he asks me eagerly to pick it up for him, if I don't do it quickly, he shouts, that's why I pick it up and I give it back to him, as soon as I can, and again, the game keeps repeating over several sessions, always describing him everything he and me are doing.

### Session 33

Unlike previous sessions, they arrive at the appointed session hour. I greet him, I give him my hand to go to the office as I usually did, but this time he gives me his hand and he also does it with his grandmother. I ask him if he wants her to accompany us and like saying yes, he takes Grandma's hand. The grandmother makes faces, but Santiago doesn't loose his hand and I tell them: *"It seems that Santiago wants his grandmother to accompany us into the office. Santiago, maybe to day you don't want to play with me but with your grandmother?"* Santiago keeps silence, listening to what I say, the grandmother looks at me and says, *"Ah Santi, what is it that you want?"*

At that moment Santiago smiles and comes closer to me. I say, *"Wow, what a relief it seems that there are some desires of playing with me, but it seems that you want to share the game with Grandma. Shall we invite grandmother?"* Santiago applauds.

In that way, we went into the office with the grandmother, who takes a seat and sits far away from us, so I say, *"Oh! that's wrong Santiago, we have not invited your grandmother to sit with us so we can play the three of us"*. Grandma blushes and gradually she sits near us, and says, *"Now yes, the three of us can play!"*

With his grandmother we take the play-doh and start making small balls, narrating him what we are doing, I give a small ball of play-doh to Santiago, he takes it, smells it, passes over his face, takes a little bit and leaves it on his legs. Afterwards Grandma gives him another ball of play-doh and we play the same game together, while the two of us together describe him the size of each one of the figures. Each

one of us describes the ball she is giving him; I describe him what he's doing with it and finally how he is keeping bits of each of the figures that we are giving him.

At a given moment, Grandma grabs a piece of play-doh that he had kept without telling him anything. Immediately Santiago gets upset, screams, and hits himself. Grandma laughs and says, *"Wow, what happened!, I'll give it back to you, but don't shout, shut up!"* Santiago continues screaming even louder and cries with anguish. It was a moment of mutual distress. For my part I observe as the grandmother seeks to silence him without understanding why Santiago got so annoyed. Screaming even louder she demands silence. I take part telling them, *"Your grandmother grabbed you a piece of play-doh that you wanted to have in your legs and that you didn't want to share; it was yours and you didn't like that she took it without warning you! Ah, how it bothered you that grandmother hasn't told you anything, it makes you angry, so angry that you feel like crying, shouting and banging and grandmother doesn't seem to understand your anger! "*

At that moment the grandmother stops smiling and apparently she seems to remark what it meant to him. Santiago takes all the play-doh he had in his legs and passes over his face. I tell him, *"There's all the play-doh you had in your legs, it seems that you want to put it on your face so no one can't take it away from you. It happens that maybe your grandmother didn't have enough play-doh to keep making you balls and that's why she took a little bit of the play-doh you had in your legs. What do you think if we ask her?"*

Grandma says, *"The truth Santi is that I didn't think you would be angry, I thought it was okay. I wanted to make a large ball and I didn't had any play-doh left, but It's not such a big deal, it's over now!"* She touches his head and he screams and hits her hand. I say, *"It seems that Santiago is still upset."* The grandmother says, *"He's like that, see how he reacts for a silly thing, rude!"*

At that moment, trying to make grandmother understand what I thought to understand, I say: *"I have an idea, what if grandmother closes her eyes now and we play as we were playing before, maybe sometimes things turn out to be different from what we thought were silly things."* At that moment Santiago wasn't shouting anymore, but he was breathing deeply and didn't allow her to get closer to him. Then Grandma closes her eyes and I tell Santiago: *"Your grandmother closed her eyes, what if we continue the game, maybe different things can happen."* I

give Santiago the play-doh and, as if nothing had happened, he touches it and I describe what he is doing, while Grandma carefully makes a small ball of play-doh. I describe to both of them what Grandma is doing.

At the moment she's going to give it to Santiago, unable to see where his hand is, she doesn't find it, then I, without saying anything, take the ball and pass it to Santiago, then she instantly opens eyes and says, *"I was scared because he said nothing; I got frightened!"*

I describe Santiago what happened: *"The problem was that your grandmother wanted to pass the little ball to you so you could play with her, but as her eyes were closed she didn't know where you were, then I took it out of his hands without a word and you know, your grandmother was shocked and opened her eyes".* Santiago is still listening. Grandma says *"But I did not shout or cried."* I tell them: *"Oh yeah, it was easier for your grandmother, she cheats us from the beginning!, Because as she can see, then it's easier for her to know what happened, I took something that was hers without saying a word, she got frightened, she didn't know what was happening, but looked at and then she knew what happened although I didn't say anything, and of course she is no longer afraid!"*

Grandma laughs and Santiago smiles. Grandma continues saying, *"Oh God, those things are so little and so valuable, forgive me Santi, one doesn't realize them, from now on I will always tell you what I'm going to do and what is happening"*

We continue with the game up to the moment in which Santiago takes the play-doh he had in his legs and he gives it to me. I take it thinking he wants to give me the whole of it. However he doesn't let it go, then without understanding what was we were doing, I ask him: *"What do I do, is it that you don't want to give me the whole of it, maybe you only want to give me a part?"*. He tries to hold it, as if he wanted to keep a piece giving me another one, then I tell him *"Ah, now I understand! You want to share with me a bit of your play-doh! All right, at the count of three, you take a piece and I take another: one, two, and three"*. I break it, Santiago only holds his little bit, and so each one of us keeps a part.

I continue saying, *"Thanks Santiago, now I have a bit more to make a larger ball!, you've shared your play-doh with me."* Afterwards he repeated it with Grandma,

who does the same and in the end she says *"Thank you Santi, good! you're not angry with me anymore."*

### Session 46

Santiago attends the session with his grandmother and his uncle. This time, as was usually done, when Santiago wants his grandmother to enter with him, he seeks her hand and invite her to join us. This time he takes the hand of his uncle, surprised he asks Santiago if he wants him (the uncle) to accompany him (Santiago). Santiago doesn't let his hand go, so I say: *"It seems that Santiago this time wants his uncle to play with us, will the uncle feel like doing it?"*. The uncle makes gestures as if he were nervous but he accepts; I describe to Santiago what apparently is happening to his uncle: *"It seems that your uncle was a little bit scared but ,finally, it seems that he feels like doing it! Let's play with your uncle"* Santiago smiles.

In the office, the uncle asks me, *"Why Santiago behaves like that breathing deeply and moving weird? While we are coming here it's terrible, he makes a fuss, and we can't soothe him. Now we are here, he doesn't do it anymore. Do you remember that at the beginning it was horrible? Why does he do that?"* I tell him, *"Maybe Santiago wants to tell us something? Santiago, what if we tell your uncle to do what we do?"* The uncle looks at me with some fear. I continue telling him *"It happens that sometimes I don't understand either, why Santiago does that, then I close my eyes to see what happens, the grandmother has already done it when she came to play with us, Shall you try?"*

The uncle agrees and closes his eyes, I tell Santiago: *"Your uncle has closed his eyes,"* and the uncle says *"Oh how it feels weird."* During all this time Santiago listens attentively to everything that happens, and I say, *"Let's imagine how is it to go on a bus while coming here with closed eyes; Maybe it's scaring, what shall we hear?, what shall we smell, and all this movement?"* The uncle, moved, opens his eyes, touches Santiago's head and tells him *"Woe kid, it's complicated"*. I tell them, *"Oh, my God, you are to go on a car you don't know, hear voices never heard before, smell so many different scents, hear so many strange noises and they pretend you not to panic!"* Santiago listens carefully, in his hands the play-doh and it seems he smiles. I tell him, *"Is that a smile or an attempt to smile?"*.

The uncle laughs and I say *"Now that your uncle knows more or less what may be happening. From now on, he must tell you what's going on in the road!"* Santiago and the uncle laugh and I tell him, *"Well I haven't showed you my office either. Santiago you don't know the whole office, you've only known the table and the seat where you are sitting. Do you want to know it? give each of us your hand! But all of us with our eyes closed! Will you?"*. I pass him my hand, I remark that the uncle is scared and I say *"Santiago it seems that your uncle is a little bit scared"*. The uncle laughs and says, *"I've never done this, but I'm already here, so let's go."* He gives his hand to Santiago and we slowly begin to touch the walls and the rest of the office. I go describing what we are touching and naming each thing, so does the uncle.

After that, the game with play-doh begins: The uncle assembles figures, much more elaborated than those made in sessions with the grandmother or just only with me. He passes them to Santiago that touches them while I describe and name him one figure; then he destroys it burying his fingers on it and throughs it to the ground. I pick it up and I give it to the uncle and he makes a figure again and the play keeps repeating.

In the following sessions and with the uncle as part of them, we show to Santiago hard toys with other textures and that can't be molded. We alternate them with the play-doh. We carry on the same game accompanied by phrases that report what happens, always naming each thing that each one of us is doing. In the beginning it was very hard for him to wait the figure with play-doh to be assembled or the toy to be passed on to him; he was hyperventilating and he was swaying. As long as we were telling him why we were delaying and that we understood he wanted to have it as soon as possible in his hands, he gradually was managing to calm down.

### **Session 61**

He comes up to the office hand in hand with his uncle, and I notice that he already walks stepping on the whole foot, as dragging his feet. While he walks he is touching the walls, he arrives to his seat and before sitting down he touches it. His uncle, pleased, tells me that Santiago is no longer wearing a diaper, that he is only using it at night; he says, *"He always warns us through noises that he wants to go to the bathroom. He never did it before and now we understand that's what he wants. At night my mom puts him a diaper, but he doesn't like it anymore"*.

The game continues, and now Santiago begins to come closer to other objects (touching the walls of the office, walking around, touching the game table, the door, etc.). I place the hard objects on the table. He touches them, he smells them, he beats them with his hands, he brushes past his face; in the meantime I am telling him each one of the things he does, and I describe him how each object is. Then he throws them to the ground, generating a great noise that he likes. With the uncle we collect them and put them back on the table; thus another style of game begins: "The uncle, between us, passes Santiago the play-doh with a shape that he builds for him (ball, hoop, bar, etc.); he touches it, he buries his fingers in the figure, and then he throws it to the table hitting the toys on it making them sound and, sometimes, they fall to the ground. I describe him everything we do and when he hits the toys, the uncle says: *You hit the target!*" He gets excited, he claps and he smiles. The uncle and I pick some of the toys that have fallen down and the game starts again. When the toys are hit, sometimes sound, and sometimes don't and the uncle is the one who says, "*Well, he did it!*" or "*No, to far, to far.*" Meanwhile, I'm saying in which direction he must throw them.

With this game, Santiago throws the play-doh and all the toys fall down, which excites him, he smiles and claps; he repeats this game faster and faster and it's very difficult for us to be able to gather the toys so as to put them on the table. I say him, "*No, but that's not fair, because you are already throwing and we haven't been able yet to put the toys on the table!*" He laughs, gets up from his seat and comes closer to the table. I say "*Touch the toys so you know where they are.*" He touches the edge of the table and sits down again, I say: "*Ready, you can already throw them.*" He takes the play-doh, he throws and throws some toys and when the uncle is lifting them up I see that Santiago is already about to throw. I say him, "*Santiago, wait that your uncle have to put all the toys!*" Santiago waits a few seconds and says us "*iNOW!*" The uncle looks at me with his eyes full of tears. I tell Santiago "*Yes Santiago, you can already throw.*" The uncle touches Santiago's head and says "*Now, Santi, now.*"

Santiago continues playing as if nothing had happened, however both the uncle and myself were deeply moved, because it was the first word he said. He repeats it time and again when he is ready to throw, so it makes us lose the game's rhythm. I say, "*Santiago, excuse me, we are delayed in the game since we are excited because of*

*that inow! that you repeat each time you are going to throw".* Santiago laughs, jumps from his seat and after a short time of play we leave the office.

When I say goodbye to his grandmother, his uncle tells her what had happened in the session. I notice that she is starting to cry, crying that Santiago also perceives and I say, *"Yes Santiago, you're feeling what I'm seeing. Your grandma is crying"* His grandmother cleans her face and says, *"Oh God, it's over"* I tell Santiago: *"What if we ask the grandmother what happened, why she is crying?"* Santiago stands still as if waiting what grandmother says and she looks at me scared. I say them, *"Anything goes here, here we play, we fight, we shout, we laugh, sometimes we talk and we can also cry. Besides it is not fair that only Santiago cries"* Santiago and his grandmother laugh. The grandmother says, *" Oh, I don't know why I cried, it is very hard, I know he's not sick, that he understands. Oh, Santi, is that you look better, now you're closer, you're not longer so scared facing new things; before you were scared by everything, you didn't touch anything. Now that you told us not to stop talking him, I do it all the time and he likes it. Seeing him like this, smiling, brave and calm, it's no so hard to go out with him, it's no longer difficult to bring him here and he doesn't use diapers anymore; that's why I'm like that, I'm very moved... and he said now!"*.

I say *"It seems that now we also cry with joy, what do you think, Santiago?"*. He gets closer to his grandmother and she hugs him.

At this moment the grandmother tells me that waking him up she asks him how is he doing, and he answers: "OK." He starts saying my name, he spells the vowels, he tries to say other words like *plado* (play-doh), *grather* (grandmother), *cle* (uncle ), *haer* (hammer) during the session or outside it. He walks stepping on the whole foot; he doesn't sleep in diapers anymore, he answer questions with short words and, finally, he enters the kindergarten.

There is still a long way to go, losses to elaborate, constructions and recognitions to experience, for both Santiago and the rest of his family. From now on, the grandmother takes care of the child. His mother that lives in a house next door visits him every day but she has left Santiago entirely in the care of his grandmother.

### COMMENTS

I thought starting this article with a brief theoretical summary. On reconstructing how this experience occurred, I gave priority to the living experience and also to the fact that the reader went along it emotionally. Now, knowing the need that invades us as analysts to understand what happens in our analytical work, how we establish this relationship and the analytical process with patients, I devote this section -thinking aloud- to comments of what, perhaps, was happening to me as an analyst through this experience.

I want to start describing my first feelings facing this new meeting. Since I watch the whole family in the waiting room, I notice how far away Santiago is. Even being ignorant of his disability and the reason for consultation, I wonder what the reason is for him to be so distant in the presence of his large family; his behavior and his family reaction have a great impact on me. When I come closer to them I notice, as I describe in the story, the difficulties that he has to interact. Santiago is alone in spite of being with so many people. I feel his mother distant and him devoid of the care he needs. She recognizes herself as her mother, but she keeps a distance. Regarding the others, perhaps not knowing how to mix with him, that cries, that meows, that hits himself, they ignore him and deny his real existence.

Faced with this, I felt that Santiago needed that we described to him what was there, where he was and who I was. It seemed that that was what he conveyed to me: that I reflected with descriptions and perhaps with a quieter tone of voice and less imperative; Santiago calmed down and so did I, for both it was a new and abrupt moment. Perhaps, thinking from a distance, in this initial meeting I began to feel closer to him and then the applause and descriptions that emerged from this first contact, gave both a means of peace; in my case as if I were thereby recognizing his reality. "Looking at him"

After the first interviews and before starting the session, Santiago was already in my mind with fear and perhaps identified with the mother and the family, that faced with the difficulty to mix with him, said to me: "*It's hard for me... it's hard for all of us, we brought him to you to see what's happening.*" I felt I couldn't deal with him, that I didn't have neither the resources nor the means to receive him: how can I adapt my office for him?, what toys would he use?, what will we do in the office? If he can't draw, he can't see or speak, how could we play? Wouldn't it be

better that someone more experienced saw him? Where can I find books to tell me what to do? Just like them, I wanted to refer him to other people that could do something. However, and perhaps as I did with him, while I was there for him, my supervisors and my analyst supported me emotionally and without giving me a manual as I fantasized in the beginning, they listened and supported my fears, later, emotions and anguishes shared and lived with Santiago and his family, and even those raised in supervision.

Thus, looking at Santiago, recognizing him, feeling him, sharing and supporting his actions, a structure of care that could be called "family" was constructing itself, where there wasn't necessary to be physically present (remembering the physical presence of Santiago's family) but psychically. With these resources the first steps to a better psychical development were built, as a creative act, recognizing and living in the here and now. Somehow I had found / created a psychical space for Santiago inside me, from which I could take care of him and could pay attention to him.

Reintroducing the applauses that came up from the first session, because now I think they were the means and perhaps the product of this get to know one another, trying every day to put myself in his place, to experience the feelings and emotions that he conveyed. I have no clear explanation of why applauses and no other action. Maybe it was an intuitive act, a reaction product of my identification with him. As a mother, that in connection with the baby's needs and emotions shows this type of reactions. They can be all, some or any of them. I am clear about that the applause was the bond that contacted us, by which and with which he recognized me, he knew he was in my presence, establishing a means of communication and trust for both as for me also meant being recognized: "Being looked at".

Santiago was just not in session with me, he remained in my mind even outside them, as often happens when we think about our patients. In this opportunity my mind was occupied with misunderstood feelings. It was difficult to understand how hard would be for Santiago to contact the outside world (touching, stepping on the whole foot, talking, etc.) which led me, in session and out of session, to try to feel what I didn't understand. Then, at home, in spaces and places well known, I began to be there without seeing (walking, eating, listening television, etc.) I discovered different sensations: anxiety, confusion, fear of silence in the dark, fear of walking, fear of ignoring what I was eating, helplessness on seeing I was unable to do usual

things, beating me with every stumble or sudden movement, able to walk only by shuffling for fear of falling. With these strange acts and even as a game, I could meet, I don't know if with him in his physical absence but with my own fears and perceptions. To put it in some way, I woke up my other senses, I found another kind of fear and, somehow, I began to "look at" from other senses the relationship with Santiago. Suddenly, and perhaps for that reason, at that session in which our anguish was so excessive, he for what he felt and I because of what I saw in him and did not understand, I decided not to look. I moved away from that distance that, without realizing, it was there. Seeing his distress and not sharing it, was like a barrier that I dared to feel, receive and live what he was giving me. Then I closed my eyes and I got carried away by what he transmitted, feeling that distress and that anxiety in the face of the unknown that invaded our space and the different voices that were so loud that they seemed to be present in our office. From there I could make sense of what was happening, try to describe the fear that it was generating and show the reality that was arising.

Apparently, we had found a common environment, we had found us. Thinking about it now, it seems that Santiago felt he was found. Santiago's image passes through my mind waiting to be found by my hand, so as to we were going together, slowly, perceiving the world. This is how I remember every session that came after. It was as if in each one of them, in my presence, Santiago were discovering the world, with fears, anxieties, curiosity and also defending himself. It wasn't an easy task, for the same way as he discovered the world, I haven't felt behind, each session was indeed a raw discovering of his distresses, to live them with him, to be ready to do it and, if possible, to give him a different experience. Sometimes it was very difficult for me, and sometimes impossible, but now I remember the words of one of my supervisors that fueled this going on assembling his world: "Give everything of you during the session, it may be that you stay exhausted and destroyed afterwards, but you have the rest of the day to assemble again. Perhaps for him is quite the opposite, he only has an hour in the day to feel himself a little bit assembled."

Now we can play. I say this and I think that this "Now we can play" is how I am familiarized with the term play, or at least how to play with a baby. It seems that from my current place of rapporteur, distant from what I lived through with Santiago, it's easy for me to name "to play, to support, to introject, to plan, to symbolize, more or less integrated, and so on." Perhaps defensively from my side, I impose a theoretical framework, when the experience with Santiago transcends the

namings. These concepts, which are certainly present in the development of this work and that come to life in its psychical development, don't go far enough, for me, when the time comes to report this experience. But as the language that allows us to communicate is this, there is no other choice but to limit the experience in it. New dynamics and roads were built. Santiago was leading me by the hand towards his games, towards his encounters. Perhaps without realizing, he always was who led me in his road, where I was only throwing light.

It seems that in this passing through, which was becoming safer, Santiago invited and included his grandmother. This invitation wanted to tell us something, I think I have understood: that the grandmother and, later his uncle, were part of the session speaks about that new relationship that he was building, in which he was the one who was managing. Santiago was no longer the child that, as in the initial interview, was taken, placed, ordered to do; he was no longer a thing. He was a person who expressed what he wanted, that was showing himself and making me share his family with him. Something in his mind was piecing together and was opening space so we could "watch" inside it the rest of his family. In what direction would this take us? I didn't know, but I was willing to discover it. Maybe I transmitted him this peace that I felt and also I allowed him his desire of passing through on this new way of living his family, without knowing what it would be.

Thus, his grandmother made an incursion into this new space of emotional experiences. It wouldn't have been like this if she wouldn't facilitated it. I must admit that this interaction with the grandmother surprised me at the very moment that Santiago said, in his own way, that he wanted her to join us. A little tension was generated in me. That, implied another type of work? What would the grandmother said seeing what was happening in session? Would I be assessed as a therapist? Already at the office and living what was arising, my own fantasies were dispelling to make room for the reality that there was arising for us: a grandmother who conveyed me his fear, the short-circuit with Santiago and, at the same time, all the availability and the desire for wanting to come closer and meet him.

In the first meetings with her and Santiago I felt that I was in front of a grandmother who imposed her logic, her tastes and modes, and a Santiago that didn't receive anything of that. It was as if he were in front of a grandmother who was speaking to him in an unknown language, that didn't meet his needs. That was how for a time, I believe, I became a translator of feelings, *"what your grandmother seems to feel ... it seems, Santiago, that you didn't like what your grandmother did ..."*

I represented, then, in part, for the grandmother, a sort of guide that oriented her and showed her Santiago's mind, and he made himself known through me, until little by little they were interacting between them; he already was communicating with her (sharing the play-doh with her, receiving the pieces of play-doh, playing with her). Maybe in this way, a place was settling in which the grandmother opened space to feel him, to feel herself and share with us the emotions she experienced; the proof for me was that she allowed herself, as a game, to put herself in his place and for a very valuable moment, to be in the same circuit.

Now, I perceive this experience with the grandmother as if I has provided them a space, an environment for the grandson and grandmother could see each other, as when a baby, in the silence of the night, coming into contact with his mother, experiences the intimate moment to know each other and gives others the chance to enter that world.

Then, the uncle comes to take part in these sessions. I remember now what it meant for the grandmother, and eventually for the uncle, that Santiago chose whom he wanted to go with. It was as if, after a while, these parents' representatives, were competing for whom was Santiago's favorite. Returning to the experience with the uncle, I highlight the mobility that the session generated. I wouldn't want to refer to parental functions to describe this moment, but it was valuable their participation. By moments, we seemed to represent parental figures necessary for his development. The novelty provided by the uncle, not only for Santiago but even for me in the game, allowed me to move and give a step aside, taking up just a part, the one of a mother that supported emotionally and described the great figures that the uncle was building for him. The language that he provided to Santiago showed him another kind of relationship, a fellowship of men, where I only marked it and let them make an incursion into it.

This last phase of analytical work with the child and his uncle, as with the grandmother, wouldn't have been possible without the availability, interest and commitment of the uncle. The curiosity and the fear with which he first approached the session, conveyed me the feeling that it was with him that Santiago and I could build this new phase. As happened in that session in which, with his eyes closed and holding hands with his uncle and me, Santiago traveled across the office, the image of supporting figures was building in Santiago's mind, perhaps as happened in my mind: I as a maternal representative and the uncle as that of the father. This sensation that I feel was experienced by all. I don't remember if it was explicitly named, I dare to think that not, because it wasn't easy, despite

recognizing it out of session, that this relationship was being built in the environment of each session and that, watched from the outside, sometimes looked like parents playing with the child. Somehow this image was also instituted in the uncle who, since the first session that Santiago invited him to, he never missed the meetings that he, together with the grandmother, expected anxiously to know who would accompany Santiago.

It seems, then, that in this way I've been telling and evoking, there wasn't more than what was heard and experienced in the last sessions I set out: the contact with external objects, walking with greater confidence, continence and his first words. It seems that in his mind, Santiago has what might be called good objects that, together with the real external experience, have given him another way of experiencing the distresses or the anxieties experienced by him before and in a frame or in a supportive environment, warm, loving. Now he can free his verbal expressions, his delicate bodily movements, he can "look at and being looked at".

I want to end this paper talking briefly about this "look at" that, in quotes, I have placed in this section. While I was writing this paper this word, to look, came to my mind. It makes sense that it was that word and not another, because for me the great difficulty in the background of this work was his inability to look. I felt that it was difficult to transmit and introduce the world to someone who couldn't see it. I remember in one of the supervisions, the great discussion that provoked the use or not of this word with him, since in many cases my comments at session were: "*Look at the play-doh... if you look it's cold.*" In the discussions we posed that this would confuse Santiago because "he doesn't look" and eventually we all realized that he looked, he looked at me, looked at us and maybe we were the ones that couldn't give the symbolic value that transcends the word "look". Allowing ourselves to look with the other senses involves looking with the unconscious that does not discriminate whether there are eyes or not. That's one of the greatest lessons that I thank Santiago.

### **Bibliography**

- Bianchedi, E. (1984). El bebe kleiniano. *Revista Psicoanálisis*. Tomo IV, No. 2-3. Asociación Psicoanalítica de Buenos Aires.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (). La teoría de la mente en Bion. Lecture in the Asociación de Epistemología de la Psicología y el Psicoanálisis.

- Isaac, S. (1962). Naturaleza y función de la fantasía. *Desarrollos en Psicoanálisis*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós
- Klein, M. (1926). Principios psicológicos del análisis infantil. *Obras completas*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1926). La importancia de la formación de símbolos en el desarrollo del yo. *Obras completas*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1929). La personificación en el juego de los niños. *Obras completas*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1935). Contribución a la psicogénesis de los estados maniaco depresivos. *Obras completas*. Paidós: Buenos Aires
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1946). Notas sobre algunos mecanismos esquizoides. *Obras completas*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Paidós.
- Winnicott, D. (1945). Desarrollo emocional primitivo. *Escritos de pediatría y psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1950). La agresión en relación con el desarrollo emocional. *Escritos de pediatría y psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Editorial Paidós
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1952). La psicosis y el cuidado de niños. *Escritos de pediatría y psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1956). Preocupación maternal primaria. *Escritos de pediatría y psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Editorial Paidós.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1971). Realidad y juego. Barcelona, Editorial Gedisa: