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## ETHICS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

From the classical model  
to the implications of the «moral pact»

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Themes relating to the evaluation of human behaviour, its characteristic free will and the issue of the meaning of life in its broader sense, pertain to the ethical aspects of our existence, but they also challenge all disciplines dealing with knowledge, and psychoanalysis is certainly one of these.

The conceptual revolution brought about by the Freudian model, with its overcoming of the idea of the «aware» man, and the description of an «unaware» human being, constantly torn between his drives and society's values, rules and customs, offers a valuable contribution on the basis of which it is possible to understand how individuals construct an internal moral world.

This contribution, however, appears at first to have undermined some principles involving the idea of ethics as aiming understanding the rational foundations of our choices, of what is right and what is wrong. Psychoanalysis is in fact widely known for having highlighted the unconscious reasons motivating human behaviour, whilst the ethical dimensions of psychoanalytic theorisation and treatment, that can be demonstrated by an examination of the implicit duties of analyst and analysand, are far less debated in the literature.

The moral responsibility required in the first place to the analysand, who must assume the «responsibility for both sorts [good and bad impulses]» constitutes a first ethical contribution of the Freudian model which, broadening the realm of conscious freedom, encourages the patient to take on responsibility for unconscious motives too: «and if, in defence, I say that what is unknown, unconscious and repressed in me is not my 'ego', than I shall not be basing by position upon psycho-analysis, I shall not have accepted its conclusions» (Freud, 1925/1961c, p. 132).

Finally, the ethical principles guiding the analyst, such as respect for the patient, sincerity, privacy and the pursuit of therapeutic objectives constitute the ethics of treatment which «derives from the application of a method within a practice – that is, from the specific rules of its art. Psychoanalysis does not seek to mould the individual to the demands of the environment – in other words, it is in the service not of 'good', but of the obligation of 'truth'» (Gori, 2002, p. 549).

### 3.1. THE FREUDIAN MAN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MORAL WORLD: «WO ES WAR, SOLL ICH WERDEN»

An underlying issue in the debate on ethics in psychoanalysis relates to the very nature of the conceptual paradigm of this discipline. If we examine some theoretical passages, heeding Freud's famous suggestion, «the *best way of understanding psychoanalysis* is still by tracing *its* origin and *development*» (Freud, 1922/1961, p. 235), we may at first form the impression that the issue of individual responsibility of the «Freudian man» has been «seized» or at least not given enough consideration starting from the earliest psychoanalytic formulations.

The concept of psychic determinism, for example, which is at the heart of the so called «classical model», introduces an idea of mental functioning which seemingly denies the component of freedom and self-determination, primary sources of individual responsibility. It indicates how, in the psychic apparatus, similarly to what happens in the physical environment, no phenomena are disconnected (Brenner, 1973). Each event is determined by other preceding events so that there is no discontinuity in our mental life and we are, in some way, the product of our past experiences, almost the result of an inter-linking of events and representations.

This vision, which appears to regard the individual as a hostage of his own history, can be mitigated, however, by a less rigid and literal interpretation of Freud's writings. According to other authors (Wallwork, 2005), in fact, this construct was used by Freud to stress how no behaviour in our daily lives happens by chance but has «reasons» that can be found in our repressed unconscious motivations, which are the driving force of dreams, parapraxes, forgettings and symptoms.

In our mental life nothing is therefore meaningless, and the goal of analysis is that of rediscovering the ties in the chain of meanings until the patient is able to gain a certain degree of awareness and a new freedom in his behaviour through an experience of understanding and relatedness (Freud, 1914/1957b). In this latter interpretation the theoretical principles seem to be less stringent and we can identify in the very goal of therapy an aspect that has to do with individual freedom and responsibility, a fundamental assumption of what we regard as right thoughts and right actions.

However, it is in the drive model especially that many have seen the core of a restrictive vision of individual freedom, resulting from an interpretation of mental functioning borrowed entirely from physiology, which has brought psychoanalysis endless criticism. From such framework derive both the concept of drive and that of reflex arc, as well as the «constancy principle», as Freud fully describes in *Instincts and their vicissitudes*. In particular, it is the underlying assumption of the intentionality postulate applied to the nervous system that makes him affirm: «the nervous system is an apparatus which has the function of getting rid of the stimuli that reach it, or of reducing them to the lowest possible level; or which, if it were feasible, would maintain itself in an altogether unstimulated condition» (Freud, 1915/1957, p. 119).

In this work we find one of the passages where Freud clearly attributes to the psychic apparatus the task of reducing stimulus intensity, whilst the supremacy of the pleasure principle is introduced, associated to the tendency to maintain a low amount of excitement: «the activity of even the most highly developed mental apparatus is subject to the pleasure principle» (*ibid.*); and, in another passage, he adds: «unpleasurable feelings are connected with an increase and pleasurable feelings with a decrease of stimulus» (p. 120).

These considerations, partly already put forward in *Project for a scientific psychology* (1895), are furthered in the *Three essays on the theory of sexuality* (1905) and in *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920) through theoretical formulations that once again highlight the theme of pleasure/displeasure surrounding the build up of tension but also the capacity to modulate the tendency towards fulfilment through postponement and delay, and the individuation of a wider range of ways to reach gratification, not restricted to sexual activity only. Thus, Freud introduces the perspective of a path along which, through various degrees of disillusionment, the individual moves in the direction of psychological maturation and the integration of the norms and rules necessary to adaptation.

The idea of an individual capable of adapting his behaviour to the demands of reality through increasingly complex organizations under the supremacy of the ego (Freud, 1922/1961) provides a picture of the ongoing negotiation imposed by the need to adapt to the real world, and stresses the use of repression as one of the main psychological strategies used for this purpose. It is in this «hard work» that we seem to detect an ethical dimension, in the sense of *process* more than *contents*; the ego manages to withstand the renunciation of gratifications that were under the direct domain of the pleasure principle in order to obtain new ones. These may take many forms, may be profoundly in tune with the ego's needs and be finalised to adaptation. However, in many passages of Freud's early work, or at least until 1901, what the ego renounces is still a primitive and still non-relational way to obtain fulfilment. But if we consider the concept of drive within the structural model (Freud, 1920/1955) and the psycho-sexual development theory (Freud, 1905/1953), it becomes apparent that the re-consideration of needs in the light of the needs of someone else is a condition to obtain a more articulated and complex pleasure, a pleasure, we could say, that is «under the supremacy of the relationship».

We are therefore dealing with conflicts and compromises through which the individual reaches an adaptation to reality. These somehow convey the existential torment of each of us and the success or failure of our capacity to tune our needs with those of the other person, to experience them in unison, to dress them in many ways, to sublimate them. In *Psychoanalysis* Freud (1925/1959) describes the structural model in detail and stresses the interplay between different forces that inhibit each other and find a compromise; in this dynamic movement we see the gap between the conscious and the unconscious and the ongoing conflict between what we would like to be or do and what we can, instead, become or obtain.

In the *Ego and the id* Freud again deals with the theme of the difficulty to mediate personal needs with the need to adapt to reality. At this regard, he

writes: «moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. [...] The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions» (Freud, 1922/1961, p. 25). Further on he proposes the metaphor of the rider: «thus in its relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces», and he continues with this similitude: «often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own» (*ibid.*).

So, the torment of man is having to adapt to both other people and reality by following rules and imposing limitations on oneself. This act of mediation is a constant effort which sometimes fails and at other times goes too far, in one way or the other. It is an operation with uncertain and changing outcomes, and the fact that often the rider is forced to follow the will of the horse, obey him and lead him where he wants induces Freud to make the famous statement in the short essay *A difficulty in the path of psychoanalysis*: «The ego is not master in its own house» (Freud, 1916/1955, p. 143).

The metaphor of the man living a conflict and in need to find a balance between the risks of excessive sublimation and those of being at the mercy of uncontrolled drives is a central aspect of psychoanalytical anthropology. When psychological forces «enter into compromise» the person lives a state of well-being; on the other hand, upsetting these forces has the potential to induce pathology and may undermine psychological balance (Lis, Stella, & Zavattini, 1999). We could say that this strategy is successful when we don't have to sacrifice too big a part of our happiness or, in other words, when we can move from a primitive to a more mature morality.

If we try to further our considerations within the theory of object relations, which represent the heart of *psychoanalytic practice*, we can more easily trace the development of Freud's vision of man, evolving as clinical practice poses new questions and new challenges and eventually elicits important changes. Anyway, Freud is fully aware of the appropriateness of his ongoing revision and regards psychoanalysis as thinking «on the move», constantly prodded by practice. He in fact writes: «and it is possible that facts of clinical analysis may be found which will do away with its pretension» (Freud, 1922/1961, p. 42).

As it has been stressed in many critical reviews of Freud's theory, even though in very different ways (Holt, 1989; Sullivan, 1956; Eagle, 2011), Freud clearly moves from a perspective that emphasises the dynamism of the psychological apparatus, fuelled by the energy of the instinctual drive, to a perspective that, still keeping a biological metaphor, contemplates an integration of forces organising themselves and intertwining in relation to external reality and the relational object. We can see an ethical aspect emerging from these revisions, inasmuch as the individual comes to be seen in a dimension of «relatedness», a new perspec-

tive which is also apparent in the shift from the concept of narcissistic libido to that of object libido (Freud, 1914/1957).

As argued by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), we must not forget that Freud, even though intent on building a scientific psychology, also stressed the «importance to see the theory of drives as a theory of meanings» and that the structural model's metapsychological formulations may also be applied to interpersonal exchanges, affects and fantasies.

We may refer here to the psychic operation described in the *Ego and the id* as the way in which different drives can become mixed. This shift, within the drives model's second formulation, highlights with particular emphasis *Eros* and aggression, no longer regarded as separate forces but seen in their entanglement, that is in the possible mingling of a destructive force of cruelty and conflict with a positive force of energy and passion, to the extremes of tenderness or sadism.

Freud deals with the theme of the aggressive drive regulation and the renunciation of instinctual needs in a famous passage: «one would think that a re-ordering of human relations should be possible, which would remove the sources of dissatisfaction with civilization by renouncing coercion and the suppression of the instincts, so that, undisturbed by internal discord, men might devote themselves to the acquisition of wealth and its enjoyment. That would be the golden age, but it is questionable if such a state of affairs can be realized. It seems rather that every civilization must be built up on coercion and renunciation of instinct» (Freud, 1927/1961, p. 7).

So, it is out of the ego's efforts to contain the drives, the force of the aggressive drive in particular, that selfish and individualistic tendencies may arise. Let's try to sum up the considerations and metaphors used by Freud in order to offer a lively picture of this tiresome work: «helpless in both directions, the ego defends itself vainly, alike against the instigations of the murderous id and against the reproaches of the punishing conscience. It succeeds in holding in check at least the most brutal actions of both sides; the first outcome is interminable self-torment» (Freud, 1923/1961, pp. 53-54); and in another passage he continues: «from the other point of view, however, we see this same ego as a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego» (p. 56).

The complexity of this task is again stated when he seems to point out that regulating one's behaviour is a fundamental aspect of normal functioning «if anyone were inclined to put forward the paradoxical proposition that the normal man is not only far more immoral than he believes but also far more moral than he knows, psycho-analysis, on whose findings the first half of the assertion rests, would have no objection to raise against the second half» (p. 52).

The ethical relativism of which psychoanalysis has often been accused (Fromm, 1973; Hofmann, 1976) needs therefore to be reconsidered in the light of the long and tiresome process that allows the individual to grow into adulthood and negotiate his needs with those of the object and the social community; in this developmental path a root element is the mechanism of identification, that

forms the foundations of friendship bonds, citizenship, and social organisation as a whole, as Freud remarks in *Civilisation and its discontents* (1929).

In the above mentioned writing the conflict between individual needs and the demands of the social community is analysed in greater depth: «a good part of the struggles of mankind centre round the single task of finding an expedient accommodation – one, that is, that will bring happiness – between this claim of the individual and the cultural claims of the group; and one of the problems that touches the fate of humanity is whether such an accommodation can be reached by means of some particular form of civilization or whether this conflict is irreconcilable» (Freud, 1929/1961, p. 96). Freud's conclusion, as we know, is a pessimistic one; despite his underlining how people strive towards happiness, his conclusion is that: «the intention that man should be 'happy' is not included in the plan of 'Creation'» (p. 76). What is, according to Freud, the essence of happiness? He indirectly points to this when he talks about the goals of therapy being about reaching some capacity for work and enjoyment.

Even in these lines we can identify an ethical issue: one of the components of happiness is seen as dependent upon the creative use of one's capacities and the *lieben*, in the sense of the capacity to find pleasure. Elsewhere in Freud's work this has been identified with the physical and spiritual pleasure of love, but in this different interpretation a component of *reciprocity within relationships* is more highly valued. Furthermore, we believe that Freud's reference to the goals of therapy, even though, at a first glance, minimal, should not be overlooked. An aspect of the maturity that comes with adulthood consists in the objective acknowledgement of the reality of one's own possibilities and the renunciation to the omnipotent childhood illusions. The ongoing reference to the sublimation mechanism, at the heart of what Freud believes to be a «positive happiness» must also be kept in mind. In the capacity to sublimate *to various degrees* the instinctual components lies the possibility for the individual to love and be loved, to feel pleasure in learning, appreciate beauty and work creatively and satisfactorily (Freud, 1929/1961).

Therefore, aiming towards a civilised behaviour, respectful of social requirements, is a necessary pathway to adaptation; the process of psychological development and growth go in this direction, despite various individual differences; the social context, in its turn, fosters this objective within and outside the family: «*education* can be described without more ado as an incitement to the conquest of the pleasure principle, and to its replacement by the reality principle; it seeks, that is, to lend its help to the developmental process which affects the ego. To this end it makes use of an offer of love as a reward from the educators» (Freud, 1911/1958, p. 224).

The reference to education and those renunciations reinforced by the educator's approval allows us to briefly reflect on the theme of relationships. As already noted, the relational dimension, so central to the clinical practice, remains a controversial aspect in the so called drive model. Nonetheless we must acknowledge that the theoretical changes that Freud gradually introduced determined the fact that such model, at some point, could no longer be considered the only deter-

minant of behaviour and experience. The motivational theory changed and in some way Freud moved from phylogenesis to ontogenesis in order to explain the reasons underlying behaviour.

Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) point out these progressive modifications highlighting how in the classical model there is a clear shift from a perspective centred on internal psychic operations fuelled by instinctual drives to a perspective that takes into account the integration of forces arising from the relationship with external reality. The evolutionary step from egocentric selfishness, summed up by the principle *mors tua vita mea*, to arrive at the capacity to think in terms of object relations frees the way to relational and social outcomes that may be found in the quality of romantic relationships as much as in altruistic behaviour.

We could say that the Freudian Man has a foot in biology and is gazing at relationships, even though, in general terms, as it has already been noted, the classical model cannot be considered a theory of affects. The concept of narcissism, for example (Freud, 1914/1957), stands as «one of the main gateways» to a maturational process in which the ego's investment of libido on itself (primary narcissism) gradually moves to the relationship with real objects. This, in a similar way to all the Oedipus related themes (Freud, 1905/1953), with their interplay of ideas and wishes, the renunciation of which becomes a realistic necessity, constitutes a further example of relational experiences that allow real versus hallucinatory wish fulfilment. They also require renunciations and adaptive negotiations in consideration of what is adequate or possible in the relationship with the other person. In this aspect we again find an ethics of relationships, in the sense of the acceptance and pursuit of what can be defined as adaptive reciprocity.

If we reflect in general on Freud's idea of the mind, we may be able to find an ethical dimension in the passages that attribute to the ego a regulating function both in respect of the drives and superego harshness. A *virtuous*, almost *wise* stance can be seen in the capacity to maintain a balance between opposite needs, without sacrificing too much of one's individual fulfilment in order to reach a social adaptation that takes into account other people and their needs. In various parts of his work Freud points out that this effort has peculiar and alternating outcomes which on one hand reflect the happenings of real life and on the other testify a certain Freudian pessimism. Other authors have picked up on this, amongst them is Kohut, with the theme of the tragic man (Kohut, 1978). We are still talking about an ethics that has more to do with process than content, whilst for what concerns the moral it needs to be acknowledged without outrage that psychoanalysis expresses an unavoidable relativism, that is the awareness that every culture across times matures different and specific contents.

What this means is that for Freud the realm of facts is always predominant on that of values, in line with a scientific more than a speculative approach (Freud, 1932/1964). This stance is apparent, at least in its premises, in *Project for a scientific psychology*, where he clearly states the goal of founding a scientific psychology based on objective evidence. Soon, as we know, this observation based approach opens to an intellectual commitment attempting to tie the observational data to a reflection on meanings, on the basis of clinical experience.

Finally, if we move from theory to practice, we find that the reflection on ethics in clinical practice is a live part of Freudian thinking, together with the many references to professional ethical conduct that constitutes one of the fundamental aspects of the reconstructive and reparatory goals of therapeutic action.

We therefore find ourselves, to use Wallwork's words, with the task of facing the «a-moral» implications of the classical theory and the moral aspect of analytical practice (Wallwork, 2005, p. 462). In reality, as we have attempted to demonstrate, accusing psychoanalysis of ethical hedonism is as banal as accusing it of pan-sexualism: «it must also be remembered, however, that some of what this book contains – its insistence on the importance of sexuality in all human achievements and the attempt that it makes at enlarging the concept of sexuality – has from the first provided the strongest motives for the resistance against psycho-analysis. People have gone so far in their search for high-sounding catch-words as to talk of the 'pan-sexualism' of psycho-analysis and to raise the senseless charge against it of explaining 'everything' by sex. We might be astonished at this, if we ourselves could forget the way in which emotional factors make people confused and forgetful» (Freud, 1905/1953, p. 134).

### 3.2. ETHICS IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS: RESPECT, COMPETENCE, HONESTY AND AUTHENTICITY

Freud himself talks of a moral pact with regard to the reciprocal commitment that analyst and patient sign up to within their therapeutic relationship; to start a reflection on this topic we could restrict the clauses of this pact to two essential aspects: «complete candour on one side and strict discretion on the other» (Freud, 1938/1964, p. 174). According to Freud the patient's pledge to talk about himself without submitting his or her discourse to any censorship must be welcomed on the part of the analyst by a steady commitment to protect, we would say today, the patient's privacy. In another passage he reiterates the same point: «analysis is entirely founded on complete candour. Financial circumstances, for instance, are discussed with equal detail and openness [...]. I will not dispute – indeed, I will myself insist with energy – that this obligation to candour puts a grave moral responsibility on the analyst as well» (Freud, 1926/1959, p. 207). In this writing, sincerity refers both to the nature of psychoanalysis and to the overall attitude of the analyst. Freud, in fact, so to say, widens the scope of the analytical relationship itself, and if the patients needs to make a sincerity pledge, together with the commitment to punctuality and payment of the analyst's fee as agreed in the therapeutic contract, the analyst must take upon himself, in the broadest sense, the ethical aspects of the therapeutic process.

The analyst's responsibility includes two main points: the quality of his training (Freud, 1926/1959) and his duty to keep his ambition under check by tailoring the therapeutic objectives to suit the real possibilities of the patient (Freud, 1912/1958). This is a delicate issue linked with an overarching theme both within

the theoretical model and the theory of practice: by this we mean the search of emotional truths as one of the therapy's aims, given which the goal of reducing the severity of symptoms is an almost secondary objective. But how is it possible, then, to conceptualise therapeutic achievements without limiting the parameters to the reported subjective well being? An answer is provided directly and indirectly by the whole theoretical body: self-regulation, the capacity to use one's own mind and experience altruistic relationships whilst maintaining a protective stance towards oneself, authenticity and awareness are the dimensions of psychological health and well being that are found throughout the psychoanalytic paradigm. It becomes apparent how the concept of psychological well being cannot be devoid of ethical considerations about ourselves and the quality of relationships that we are able to form (Di Chiara, 1985; Ferro, 1996). After all Freud himself refers in general terms to this topic when he states that the therapist, in his clinical practice takes upon himself a wide range of «duties not only towards the individual patient but [...] towards the many other patients who are suffering or will some day suffer from the same disorder» (Freud, 1901/1955, p. 8). In this argumentation Freud also points to the duty to render public psychoanalytic insights arising from clinical practice: a duty of the analyst-researcher towards science.

A topic that has been thoroughly debated within in the discussion on psychoanalytic technique, and that is relevant to many aspects of the relationship with the patient, is that of neutrality. As we know, Freud, by this word, meant to refer to the appropriateness of keeping a free floating attention in the face of the patient's communication, free of prejudice, stereotypes, long held beliefs (Freud, 1912/1958, p. 112). It is clearly a reference to an impartial attention, or a benevolent neutrality, that seems to us a requirement to «do the best for the patient» in the light of his or her psychological possibilities and the overall conditions of his or her existence. In another passage Freud (1918/1955) is more explicit and clearly states the double commitment to pursue what can be beneficial to the patient, setting aside any objective or perspective concerning his or her psychological health which may be too closely linked to the therapist's personal vision.

We can link these reflections to a brief reference to the theme of substitutive satisfaction that the patient may seek when facing the option of renouncing his symptoms with the consequent subjective suffering that this could entail: «the patient looks for his substitutive satisfactions above all in the treatment itself, in his transference-relationship with the physician; and he may even strive to compensate himself by this means for all the other privations laid upon him. Some concessions must of course be made to him, greater or less, according to the nature of the case and the patient's individuality. But it is not good to let them become too great. Any analyst who out of the fullness of his heart, perhaps, and his readiness to help, extends to the patient all that one human being may hope to receive from another, commits the same economic error as that of which our non-analytic institutions for nervous patients are guilty. Their one aim is to make everything as pleasant as possible for the patient, so that he may feel well there

and be glad to take refuge there again from the trials of life. In so doing they make no attempt to give him more strength for facing life and more capacity for carrying out his actual tasks in it. In analytic treatment all such spoiling must be avoided» (Freud, 1918/1955, p. 164).

We are facing a call to avoid offering patients an immediate relief in view of more consistent and longer lasting therapeutic objectives. It also emerges an exhortation to give up an immediate sense of efficacy – improper from the point of view of the psychoanalytic technique – in order to maintain a technically correct therapeutic approach.

The range of factors tying analyst and patient together in a relationship characterised by shared reciprocity within which the analyst holds responsibility for the treatment is, however, very broad and has been variously illustrated in many IPA<sup>1</sup> documents. The principles put forward by the IPA concern professional competence, respect towards the patient, absence of prejudices towards his personal convictions, maintaining confidentiality, honesty in professional relationships and conforming to the research based scientific principles in the communications with colleagues and third parties. Such general principles are then specified in the Standards, even if we must notice that the explicit rules and the detailed clinical accounts cannot replace criteria arising from an ethical education; we refer, here, to the implicit rules that may inform the individual practitioner facing conflictual or difficult situations.

The psychoanalytic method, in any case, is capable of «fostering a maturation in the therapist as well as in the patient» (Lis, Stella, & Zavattini, 1999, p. 17) and leads towards «the acknowledgement of wholeness, uniqueness and singularity of the patient's history» (*ibid.*). Therefore, it inevitably points to ethical choices, that is choices in which the respect of the person, the consideration of his or her benefit in the light of his or her sensibility and emotional world are deeply ingrained (Barnà-Cono, 1994).

Currently, in Italy, the debate on the ethical aspects of psychological treatment started from the realisation of the pitfalls present in the legal regulation of the profession (Law no. 56/89); awareness of these limitations allowed the broadening of the debate to include ethical and value-related principles considered as the heart of psychologists' code of conduct. Alongside this, a wider discussion has started concerning the ethical side of each act making up the professional conduct within various disciplines and various fields, regarded as «a structural aspect of the identity of a profession or scientific discipline, particularly within the field of psychology» (Quattrocchi, 1984).

It is clear that we are talking here of an issue pertaining to the very foundations of the ethics of the profession of psychology. The application of the method as a set of principles and rules belonging to a science necessarily requires combining the objective aspects, namely knowledge and praxis, with the subjective ones, namely the subjectivity of the technician and that of the client. Within the clinical

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<sup>1</sup> The International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), founded in 1910 by Sigmund Freud, is the largest psychoanalytic institution throughout the world.

field, which is the focus of the present reflection, the therapeutic acting occurs within a relationship constituting both a working and a meeting place. As argued by Gius and Coin (2000) «with the inclusion of the actor in the act, there is a shift to a complex and articulated vision opening up a relational dimension, a reciprocal interdependency between the whole and its parts, the principle of plurality, relativity and freedom of choice» (p. 29).

An action's adherence to ethical principles can be verified by the observable professional conduct. Such adherence, though, needs to be placed within the fundamental principle of freedom, determining each individual's ethical choice, as well as his or her professional and personal identity. We can also assume that every clinician experiences, on a daily basis, perhaps even with tiresome doubts, a dialectic between an «objective» and a «subjective» ethics. There is therefore a potential conflict between general values and rules and the commitment to demonstrate an ethically informed professional attitude as an intentional dimension which may determine one's professional conduct in the face of the great number and complexity of practical situations (Gius & Coin, 2001).

The above mentioned authors, in an earlier work (Gius & Coin, 1999) extensively develop the theme of the therapist's subjective ethics, focussing their research on the professionalisms of psychoanalysts belonging to the Italian Psychoanalytic Society. «The choice of this sample was due to psychoanalysis being the longest established approach, with a profound influence on all modern psychological culture» (Gius & Coin, 2000, p. 29).

Various authors (Szpilka, 2002; Garella, 2008) deal with the therapist's subjectivity within their reflection on treatment techniques: if within the psychodynamic approach the quality of the relationship with the patient constitutes the most important therapeutic factor, the therapist's responsibility lies in the monitoring of his or her own subjectivity. The therapist must therefore constantly reflect on transference and countertransference phenomena and on the meanings and projections that are thus communicated (Blass, 2003). Confronting the patient's «deeply seated» and often disguised truth, against which there is resistance, concerns both the analysand and the psychoanalyst in his countertransference, since therapeutic work revolves basically around the theme of psychic pain within the respective present and past relationships, re-activated by the analytic relationship.

### 3.3. CONCLUSIONS

In the present essay, without claiming to be exhaustive in relation to how motivational theories in the psychodynamic paradigm have evolved and have become more complex (Eagle, 2011) we treated the issue of ethics in psychoanalysis with particular reference to what emerges from the classical Freudian paradigm and what, in our opinion, is still present in the Freudian tradition at international level.

Freud's work met with many oppositions on a scientific level, partly justified by the humanistic resonance of his theoretical model, which has to be seen, as we said, as a psychology of meaning. On the other hand, the accusations of pan-sexualism or excessive emphasis on an individualistic dimension have been considered, at least from a certain point onwards, less valid and founded.

In reality Freud was pursuing on the level of ethics a pervasive theme in the European culture at the turn of the nineteenth century: the understanding of *truth* and how human beings are constantly operating a kind of self deception through the creation of *fictitious truths*. Fictitious truth emerges as the outcome of defence strategies against what can be defined «psychic reality», that is the psychological meaning *underlying* facts and conscious behaviours. The works of Musil, not to mention Kafka and Thomas Mann, witness the depth reached in the excavation of the inner psyche and the understanding of subjectivity in the golden age of the European novel, starting from Kant's reflections on moral up to the theme of rights and the consideration of man in his complexity in the period following the French revolution.

For what concerns ethics and therapeutic actions we must point to two levels of analysis: the first concerns the psychoanalyst and, in general, any psychotherapist that aims to grasp subjective meanings. The guiding principle is trying to avoid the risk of *wild psychoanalysis*. By this we mean throwing in the patient's face his or her own contradictions and the meanings hidden behind his actions and thinking which are often of an embarrassing nature. It is not only an issue of technique and timing, or an opportunity of an interpretation, but it means taking upon oneself the responsibility of *holding* and *containing* in the difficult path towards psychological truth.

The works of Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion are perfect examples of this ethics of responsibility when, as Freud would say, we face the ghosts living in the deep layers of our psyche. Winnicott in particular, when he talks of real versus false self, delves into one aspect of the understanding of truth, namely the understanding of the «distortions» that may lead a person to conform to someone else's conscious or unconscious wishes and desires. Furthermore, he also points to the responsibility of parents, and therefore also caregivers, education professionals and psychotherapists, in fostering the growth of the child or the person towards which one holds therapeutic responsibilities along the lines and inclinations of their own developmental trajectory (Winnicott, 1970).

The second level of analysis revolves around the theme of «psychic pain» – which acquires even more relevance with the understanding of the roots of one's own needs – and the responsibility that this understanding entails. «Who I am», therefore, stands aside the «what I truly wish». We think we can state that an ethics inspired by psychoanalysis is extremely strict because it points to the commitment to consider the profound *reasons* of one's wishes rather than simply justifying or heeding them. It should suffice to witness the degree of suffering and emotional upheaval reported by Musatti (1949) in various examples of dream interpretation in which the patients progressively measure themselves against the hidden layers underlying the *real meaning* of a certain dream. The same holds

true for what concerns the repressed and masked aspects of the self emerging in the behaviours characterising the «psychopathology of everyday life».

Ethics, therefore, for what concerns psychoanalytic work, must be measured by the capacity to face the «pain of psychic reality» and this requires great personal strength. In other words, to «understand» the profound reasons of our needs and contemplate how to avoid them leading to self deceit is what analysts and analysands are required to do in their reciprocal if asymmetric collaborative effort. This commitment calls for courage in order to face the «blind» aspects of self awareness and, for psychoanalysts, a constant control of the reasons behind inner emotional responses to the patient's narrative both in the case of sympathy, tiredness, irritation or the risk of collusive stances tied to the difficulty of understanding deep-seated reasons motivating human behaviour. It is also necessary, as acutely argued by Bollas, to guarantee the defence of a need and a right: «The psychoanalyst is not simply custodian of psychoanalysis. For better or for worse, wished for or not, the psychoanalytical profession is guardian of a social right – the right to speak one's mental life assured that such disclosure will be held in strictest confidence – that will need continuous representation within the dynamic vicissitudes of a free society» (Bollas, 1999).

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