

## D. - Health and Therapy

### ***“Music beyond a veil”: psychotherapy from body to the psyche through the soul elan***

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### **Introduction**

The **Imaginative Experience** session (Toller, Passerini 2007), strictly speaking, **is dedicated to evoking the imaginary** of the patient, within a psychotherapy, counselling or pedagogical path that we can start after an initial biographical stage during which the patient presents a *request for help* and we can start the therapeutic alliance. The patient, lying in the dark, with the therapist out of his visual field, is asked to relax in order to reach a Critical Ego and to dispose himself to evoke a narration starting from an initial image (Perceptive Stimulus – P. S.) given by the therapist and chosen on the basis of a theory or empathically. The patient is asked to invent and to live a story with a beginning, a peak and an end; he has to communicate aloud so that the therapist can write it and he can make verbal interventions with the goal to amplify, to help, the imaginative scene. During the next sessions we can analyse what emerged starting from a first decodifying (Semantic – S) made by the patient, interacting with the therapist (propositional – P); this way allows not to use interpretations. We can recognize different phases of therapy, from initial *Disorientation* to the contact with Transcendent (Passerini 2009).

### **Clinical Case**

The **clinical case** that I'll deal with, shows that through imaginative production of a patient affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis, an immunitary disorder with psychosomatic origin, we passed from the physical block to the spirit and the psyche. He's an Engineer, 40 years old, married, catholic. At the right moment of the therapy, I gave him a P. S. taken from a poem:

**26th I. E. – P. S. “Music beyond a veil”:** *“... I'm outside... outside of a building, a villa... I hear a piano beyond an open window... but closed by a curtain... somebody is playing... it could be a Chopin melody... I pass... by chance... in front of the window and I see the curtains... moving... at the rhythm of the music but it is a wind, a light breeze blowing... that moves them... the music... is played with mastery... with a good interpretative ability... it is fascinating because it is romantic... touching... it comes from the heart... it makes me stop in front of the window also only a moment... it seems a piano lesson... sometimes it stops... and starts again... I can't see who's playing... the window is open... I'm in the street... the villa... the gate... the fence doesn't let me get near the window... I can't imagine who it may be... the window isn't transparent... it is almost as if the person playing doesn't want to be seen but only to be listened*

to for what he's able to convey through the instrument... although I'm walking fast, I stop for an instant... I sit down... under the fence to listen to the music... it is a holiday day... I'm having a walk... it is a sunny day... I've got time to listen... **it is pleasant to let myself go... caressed by the wind... the fresh air... the sun... it is a synaesthesia... a multisensorial pleasure...** it is a pity to go away... sometimes I can hear the person gets angry... hits the keys... then starts again gently... tries again... it seems perfect... but insists because... **the person isn't able to transfer what they feel to the piano... as if the person had difficulty in accepting... had to tell... the emotions... the pains... the feelings... can't communicate...** repeats... repeats... repeats... stops in spasmodic search... the only way to be perceived outside... is the window opened on purpose... with the curtains closed as if to hide... it is like the mouth through which the singing flows... the mouth of a troubled face... repeats incessantly and **tries to communicate an inner state...** that isn't perceived by who is outside... ... (how do you imagine the person who is playing?)... ... the person is hiding... ... probably for a reason... ... **a bad physical appearance... or is shy or introverted...** or has artistic traits that can be expressed only in this way... **the person isn't skilled in communication...** with other sensorial tools is good... the point of strength is the way of communication without polluting the communication with physical appearance... the music is a sort of scream... of pain... of request for help... by somebody who is metaphorically isolated... **music allows to go beyond the barrier that isolates...** ... (what do you feel like doing?)... **crying... crying...** in a sort of a **sharing the feeling of exclusion...** as when one reads a poem... and realizes that also he (the poet) hadn't found the way to tell... **creates empathy... immediate understanding...** just like when, adolescent, we read Leopardi and we perceive our ineptitude... our weakness through the words... of the poet, in the same way **I perceive the empathy face to the hidden musician... I sit down and from outside... I cry...** ... until the evening has come down and the music stops... the light of the window is switched off... the silence falls... the evening shadows... ... I go away... **with tears in my eyes and I continue my day of holiday...**”.

**State of mind:** “... I'm touched... **the most intense moment is since I began to perceive the music as something that was gripping me inside and I sat down to listen and I started crying...**”.

### Imaginary Analysis and observations

- 1) S (Semantic, by the patient): the music imagined is the *Requiem* by Chopin, which was played at the funeral of his father and is a favourite composer of his mother, who plays the piano;
- 2) S: the relationship difficulty of the person in the imaginative scene is related to his physical defects, finding a way to be overcome thanks to musical expression “*the person isn't able [...] to tell... the emotions [...] can't communicate... [...] tries to communicate an inner state [the person has] a bad physical appearance... or is shy or introverted... [...] the person isn't skilled in communication... [...]... music allows to go beyond the barrier that isolates...*”;
- 3) S: the patient connects the imaginative representation to his back pain (due to Rheumatoid Arthritis attacks), to the shame he feels for this reason and to the inhibition in communicating this problem to others;
- 4) S – P (Propositional, by the therapist): the physical pain brings depression that involves relational difficulties;

5) S > P: the block of communication, both in the imaginary and in the reality (he reports shyness and empathy difficulties) is a shrinking of relational energy that, in the Imaginative Experience, is overcome thanks to the music.

In summary we can see that:

- from the **impaired physicality** of the person in the Imaginative Experience, which is compared with the **realistic pain** of the patient and with **shrinking of emotional-communicative energy** (both in Imaginative Experience and in the reality),
- we pass to an emotional *movement* due to the **music, that involves the spirit**, “... *the music... [...] it is fascinating because it is romantic... touching... it comes from the heart...*” and it passes **through body sensations** “*it is pleasant to let myself go... caressed by the wind... the fresh air... the sun... it is a synaesthesia... a multisensorial pleasure...*”
- that allows to **reach a level of consciousness** that “*creates... immediate understanding [...]*”
- **disclosing** the experience of **depression** “*crying... crying... in a sort of a sharing the exclusion feeling... [...] in the same way I perceive the empathy face to the hidden musician... I sit down and from outside... I cry... ... [...] with tears in my eyes*”.

If we make an *hyletic* analysis (Ales Bello 2016) according to which “the psyche is born with the body”, in the path that from the matter brings to imagination (meant as illusion and/or alteration of perception) and to transcendence in the spirit (an instance that transcends the psycho-physical living body), we can observe, in the reported Imaginative Experience, the evidence of the intertwining of these three instances: the impaired body in the imaginative illusion, which corresponds to the suffering body of patient, which “unlocks”, rises, is overcome, through the spirit, represented by the musical involvement and the harmonious physical sensations that it involves, to then access the psychic experience underlying the somatization i. e. depression.

## Conclusions

Finally, we can ask: why start the Imaginative Experience by a **poetic verse**? The answer is easy: because it has more evocative power due to the fact that poetry detects the quality of experiences, unlike prose that reports experiences; because it expresses with images what the subject feels inside; because it is due to a musical need of the soul, it has a realism in which the subject describes what he feels, thus completing the symbol that is instead based on confusion and projection. At the same time, it goes beyond what is experienceable with the senses while being based on the senses, it doesn't simply portray reality but gives form to the psyche (Raffo 2015).

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