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Contents & abstracts

Focus

The psychoanalytic encounter with autistic states

Ferrigno MP. **Listening to the silences in autistic states.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 125-133.

The article emphasizes how, in the psychotherapeutic treatment of autistic states, there is a constant need to listen to patients' silences. This in order to allow them to evolve from mute silences (that indicate a void and a nothingness) to communicative silences that may open up a space for intrapsychic and inter-psychic forms of communication in the therapeutic relationship.

Durban J. **Muteness, silence and constitution in the psychoanalysis of autistic states.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 134-148.

In this paper I wish to discuss autistic muteness vis-à-vis the autistic no-body or attacking-body states and compare this with the better developed capacity for silence as a manifestation of the capacity for movement, receptivity, connectivity and, therefore, of containment and intimacy. Unlike muteness, which for me often reflects a body-state in which "the center cannot hold", silence already indicates an internal (intra-psychic and inter-psychic) space where emotions and thoughts can be jointly and compassionately created, formulated, and structured. A central feature in autistic muteness, besides its bi-dimensionality and the flooding of archaic osmotic/diffuse anxieties and corporal anxieties-of-being, is an underlying experience of 'a violent constitution'. I think that this experience of being both a disorganized fragmenting body and a disjointed sensory-perceptual system, might bring about a violent destruction of meaningful language, with its signs and symbols. As many patients describe it, words are just weird things which could not describe their experience. The violent constitution was related to the autistic state itself that is being experienced by the child as an ongoing traumatic attack which annihilates any possible way of either communicating it or receiving meaningful communications about it.

Maiello S. **Empty voices - hollow voices. Listening to autistic silences - the resonating body.** *Richard & Piggle*, 31, 2, 2023, 149-161.

In states of profound autism, every form of mental life seems to be absent. The psychotherapist's active listening – his/her function as a *resonating body* – can constitute a container capable not only of receiving but also of creating the conditions needed if the autistic patient's silences, “empty” vocal expressions and echolalias are to turn from a-symbolic elements into proto-symbolic, rhythmical vocal expressions that are alive and sharable. A clinical history illustrates the passage from a use of the voice as a means of isolation to its initially evacuative and projective function (partly an expression of memories of early traumas) and then its use as a vocal assertion of a nascent Self and the vehicle for the first experiences of sharing with an other-than-self.

C. Cattelan. **“Now let's talk about the important things”: from sharing the silence to analytic dialogue.** *Richard & Piggle*, 31, 2, 2023, 162-174.

Using some clinical fragments taken from work with a patient suffering from profound autism, the author illustrates how a shared language is constructed in the analytic relationship and demonstrates the moments of developmental passage occurring in this process. The work involves all the patient's communicative potential and supports his/her role as initiator. Within this experience of co-operation, patient and analyst create ‘forms of mediation’ in order to cross space and venture into the intangible dimension of the imagination and thinking. The patient's active role in the co-construction of language leads to a more coherent Self and to his/her position as a ‘subject’ who can reflect on his/her own experiences.

Candelori C. **Some reflections on the experience of supervision during psychotherapeutic work with autistic children.** *Richard & Piggle*, 31, 2, 2023, 175-181.

This article offers some reflections on the topic of supervision relating to psychotherapeutic work with autistic children and calls attention to the paucity of theoretico-clinical contributions regarding this subject. A brief review of how, historically, supervision has been conceptualized calls attention to how it has changed over time, passing from being considered a “monitoring” activity to being understood, rather, as the “sharing between two minds at work”. The article highlights the particular difficulty that supervision work involves when tackling clinical cases of child autism and the importance of being able to tolerate moments of *impasse* without losing confidence but, rather, maintaining a constant curiosity about the patient, in a painful oscillation between despair and hope.

Priori M. **Psychoanalytic psychotherapy, autism spectrum disorders and research.** *Richard & Piggle*, 31, 2, 2023, 182-186.

Guideline 21 on the “Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Children and Adolescents” is drastically selective regarding the forms of intervention in cases of autism, precluding as it does the necessary in-depth research that could result from interventions other than the prevalently habilitative ones recommended by the document issued by the Italian National



Institute of Health. The author presents the results of research carried out in France by the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) over the last few years: results that confirm the validity of the therapeutic effects of psychoanalytic psychotherapy in cases of autism. Certain developments in psychoanalysis that make it particularly effective in the exploration of autistic phenomena are also taken into consideration.

Clinical reflections

Freud and Winnicott: ways of looking at identification

Algini ML, Bruno G. **Introduction.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 187-188.

Algini ML. **Eighteen-year-olds going to Freud.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 189-201.

A comparison of Freud's clinical case study, *The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman*, with his case study, *Dora*, makes it possible to highlight fundamental aspects of identification, as well as the levels and complexities at stake during adolescence.

Bruno G. **Mirrors and mirroring.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 202-214.

The author proposes an in-depth study of Winnicott's publication, *Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development*. Going back over some of the central concepts in the theory of development proposed by that author, she dwells both on the quality of the relationship between the child and its environment (which relationship supports the emergence of the Self by triggering the first identificatory processes) and on possible forms of psychopathological drift. The author offers some reflections on functional and dysfunctional maternal mirroring through references to her experience of baby observation and by comparing the life-stories with the artistic works in the cases of F. Bacon and Frida Kahlo.

The Enchanting Screen

D'Amato GM. **Captain Fantastic (2016). Directed by Matt Ros.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 215-218.

Rossi M. **Aftersun (2022). Directed by Charlotte Wells.** *Richard & Piggie*, 31, 2, 2023, 219-221.

Reviews

Recommended reading

Contents & abstract
