

NORMAL AND PATHOLOGIC. INTERDISCIPLINARY ASPECTS

“Any individual is a heresy”
Lucian Blaga

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Abstract. Les responsables de la recherche de notre pays comprirent, bien qu'un peu tard, l'importance de ce programme de recherches interdisciplinaires qui bousculait les frontières établies de longue date, amenant au dialogue et à la confrontation les neurophysiologistes et les psychologues, les philosophes et les ingénieurs, les anthropologues et les linguistes.

Key words: normal, activity, counseling, pathological, psychology, education, norm.

The norm is, according to the original Latin sense (*norma*), any action prescription from the pedagogical field which determines an instructive or educational action or conception. Norms have derived from various ideological conceptions and are governing principles of the human thinking, will, and action, as a result of a **personal option**.

I. MENTAL PATHOLOGY AND COGNITIVE DISORDERS

Telepathy is the process which enables human beings to convey information to each other without using the verbal language. Those who discovered that telepathy belongs to the paranormal phenomena were Mesmer's followers (the theory of animal magnetism). They noticed that some persons with magnetic capacities could read minds and execute unuttered orders. Freud viewed telepathy as a primitive faculty which was lost by man in the course of his evolution. According to his assertions, “telepathically” linked individuals must have a very strong emotional connection, and the event thus conveyed must be charged with negative feelings. On the other hand, Jung gave even more importance to telepathy, viewing it as a synchronizing function, and discovered in his experiments that this phenomenon influences our dreams. N. Wiener considers that the material support of telepathy is in fact represented by the 10 Hz-frequency waves, that is, those associated with the alpha rhythm, and that these waves would be active in a state of maximum relaxation. But the psycho-physiologists do not share this view. They argue that telepathy is a function of the unconscious which manifests itself especially during the great emotional experiences. As evidence, they bring the results of their experiments on animals.

Cognitive psychopathology is the research field situated at the intersection between the study of mental pathology and that of cognitive sciences. Its scope includes, however, various fields depending on the direct sense given to the term “cognitive”. And this term remains polysemous, being used for more meanings / references.

If it is defined from the outset, according to a frequent acceptance of the term “cognition”, as the field of mental contents accessible to the conscience and as the level of knowledge, judgment and reasoning, the cognitive input to psychiatry consists in a descriptive investigation of the intellectual correlatives in the mental pathology. An appropriate example is the description of the specific errors of judgment concerning the “positive” or “negative” value of events by the subjects suffering from depression or anxiety (J. Beck, *Grundriss der Empirischer Psychologie*, 1871, A. Delahaie, Paris). Still, if these errors are seen as explanatory for pathology, the mental processes being reduced to representations accessible to the conscience, this kind of cognitive approach inspires a psycho-pathology that defines the mental pathology as the result of errors in judgment, false knowledge or “cognitive” deficits. This approach has generated various models for depression or anxiety, as well as therapeutic methods designed to correct the supposed judgmental errors or the respective “cognition” deficits (in the sense of knowledge, way of thinking or reasoning), within a clinical framework which introduces itself as “cognitive psychiatry”. Researchers have also proposed that the infantile autism results from a specific deficit of the “cognitive” function – the so-called “theory of the spirit”.

But this approach generates a classical contradiction – between the “cognitive approach” and the clinical psychiatric approach – which privileges in exchange the affection and the emotions, especially the intentionality of the symptoms and the mechanisms and the unconscious processes which generate them. Indeed the challenge is to find out if the deficits or the cognitive anomalies of thinking, of judgment, of the consciousness, or of knowledge, which are apparent in the mental pathologies, are the causes or actually only the effects of the psycho-pathological process.

In the paper *Mécanismes mentaux – mécanismes sociaux* (1995, Ed. La Découverte, Paris), Henri Grivois (coordinator, along with Jean-Pierre Dupuis, of the respective collective volume), presents a theory about the psychotic centrality. This volume which brings together, in an interdisciplinary approach, both philosophy and psychiatry, as well as the social sciences and the cognitive sciences, has attempted to explore the mechanisms involved by the logic of the spirit and of the social body. Questions have been asked about the possible explanations of mental health and insanity, and about the way that social connection supports the ensemble of what is supposed to be maintained by it. The radical thesis, which at the same time contradicts the title of the volume, is that before reaching a delirious state . . . the psychosis, strictly speaking, has nothing to

do with the social (p. 61, H. Grivois). More specifically, the social aspect is never involved in the incipient psychosis, before centrality (p. 62). In other words, H. Grivois explains, everything that precedes centrality pertains strictly to the human being. Here is an indirect definition of the psychiatric patient: Who, besides the psychotic, can deliver a speech on himself, and then perceive it as the most universal existing speech, up to thinking that he is God himself? (p. 63). To define the discipline that he represents, the doctor points out: there is no culture without psychosis, and there is no culture without a specific reaction to psychosis either. Psychiatry is only one response among infinitely more other responses... (H. Grivois, *Mécanismes mentaux, mécanismes sociaux*; La découverte, 1995, Paris)

Although it refers to theoretical frameworks and methods that have been extensively developed after the seventies, the term ‘**cognitive psychiatry**’ is seldom used today. It serves for the definition of the applications related to mental disorders, which can be observed in the psychiatric clinic, for the study of the operations which ensure the management of the information and decision-making processes. It is based on the principle that the psychiatric disorders could be in part explained through alterations of these operations.

The relations between cognitive psychiatry and the concept of cognitive therapy must be specified. The latter has resulted from the behavioral therapies whose principles it shares: the deliberately symptom-oriented action, the use of prescriptive methods, the reference to conditioning and social learning. The cognitive therapy distinguishes itself through the distance from the behavioral postulate and through the greater interest in the beliefs rather than the desires that cognition involves. This kind of therapy can, of course, be included in a cognitive psychiatry on the condition of clearly distinguishing the theoretical presuppositions and the methods of studying the elementary cognitive mechanisms susceptible of being altered in the mental pathology.

The use of the term “neuropsychiatry” (often considered a synonym) must also be specified. This designation echoes the term ‘neuropsychology’, referring to the latter’s methods, and, like the term ‘neuropsychology’, it is used to localize the cerebral mechanisms responsible for alterations. The term ‘cognitive neuropsychiatry’ will rather be used when the purpose is to localize the neuronal centers and pathways responsible for alterations, while the term “psychiatry” (or “cognitive psychopathology”) will be used when the aim is exclusively to describe those alterations and to compare them with the normal cognitive mechanisms.

There are two modes of defining what the term “cognitive” adds to the terms of ‘psychiatry’ or ‘psychopathology’. The first mode is inspired from an intellectual kind of prejudice, opposed to the cognitive approach to the phenomena as compared to the affective approaches. The second, methodological, mode particularly marks the break with the study of the gnosiological and syndromic perspectives and symptoms.

II. CREATIVITY, PERSONANCE AND EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING

Self-awareness represents the reflection in the individual's conscience of his own psychological and social existence. It is being structured within the social relations, the individual getting to know himself and distinguishing himself from the others by comparison with his fellow beings. The individual thus becomes a personalized, individualized conscience.

Self-awareness is a result of self-knowledge, but at the same time self-knowledge is itself a process while self-awareness is a product. In the specialized literature, certain authors define self-knowledge as self-image, self-awareness or knowledge of one's self.

Self-analysis is very important for getting to know one's self. Self-analysis consists in the investigation and the meditation oriented toward the acquiring of a self-image, based on self-observation and relations with the others, aiming at perfecting the behavioral model.

The (explicit) self-awareness is preceded by the "sense of one's self", a confuse state before the moment when the person judges and assesses his / her existence. The evolution of the conscience is based on the gradual development of a corporal scheme and of an image of one's own body.

Self-awareness begins with the awareness of one's own body, based on one's internal sensations: the hunger, the thirst, the pain . . . as well as the proprioceptive and kinesthetic sensations (that is, the sensorial perceptions of the body position and movement).

L. Blaga calls **personance** the resonance or the echo of the abyssal categories at the level of the human consciousness. Personance is at the same time a particularity and a quality of the unconscious. Etymologically, it derives from the Latin term 'pers-sonare'. It involves the assimilation of the unconscious which forces its way, "with its structures, its waves, and its contents, through the gates of the consciousness" (*Orizont și stil*, p.99). The unconscious infiltrates the areas of consciousness either in a diffuse manner or more consistently, becoming part of the conscious axiological categories. Through these "echoes" or through "personance", the unconscious cooperates with the consciousness and nuances its content, giving it shape and depth. Consciousness thus becomes more malleable, borrowing from the unconscious the restlessness, the ambiguity, the penumbra, the obscurity, and even contradictions of stratification. In short, through "personance", the consciousness gains perspective, character and a multidimensional profile. It strongly manifests itself in the field of artistic creation, but it is not limited to this area.

As a persistent, "constant" phenomenon, the "personance" lasts as long as the human spirit. Blaga distinguishes the personance from the sublimation. After efficiency, personance is the second factor through which the unconscious makes its way to the consciousness, either to its margins or right into its structure. Sublimation is, in the psychoanalysts' opinion, a "disguise" of the libido in cultural

factors. Personance is the undisguised “reflex”, or reflection, in the consciousness, of certain moments, attitudes, initiatives, horizons situated in the unconscious and touched, like a milder echo, by the light of the consciousness.

“The abyssal categories are therefore present in the consciousness in the form realized in the cultural creations. The values, the norms, the criteria that the consciousness relies on when evaluating the cultural creations are, at least in part, the results of a ‘personance’ from the unconscious, that is, an echo of the abyssal categories” (*Geneza metaforei și sensul culturii*, p. 418).

Blaga was concerned with the issue of **personality**, especially in his early writings. Later on, his attention turned to the fully-developed, solar human being, to the genius and to the universal man.

The influence of psychoanalysis on Blaga’s work is well-known; Blaga himself acknowledges it, as well as the influence of the abyssal categories, that is, the style.

Let us remember now a few things concerning the creativity. In psychology, the creativity is seen as the capacity of producing many and diverse ideas, to make connections between ideas that apparently do not have too much in common (which can, however, be connected through a series of associative passages), to restructure the contexts. As far as the personality aspects are concerned, creativity has been associated with openness and risk acceptance, with ambiguity and contradiction, at the expense of the preference for complexity. In a psychoanalytic perspective, creativity has been placed on the same plane as the primary process.

We point out that the polarity primary process / secondary process represents in psychoanalysis two fundamental modes of the psychological functioning. The primary process is specific to the unconscious and it is regulated by the pleasure principle; it consists in the fact that the excitations (urges, desires) tend towards immediate release, that is, towards pleasure (through the action of the external world or through hallucinations, as it happens during sleep); then the urge follows the transition from a mental content (representation) to another, provoking confusing phenomena such as the ‘condensation’ of more representations into a single one, and the ‘displacement’ of one representation by another. The secondary process is specific to the consciousness and it is regulated by the reality principle. The release of the excitation, the satisfaction of the urge and of the desire are not immediate, but go through the reality-check first, which shows that they are different. Among the regulated functions of the secondary process are the attention, the judgment, the reasoning; the transition from a representation to another follows the logical principles (the principles of identity and of non-contradiction), even if in the *artistic activity* the thinking modality intervenes according to the primary principle.

From the classical thinking we should keep in mind that the essence of creativity consists / resides in novelty and originality. Thus the artistic genius entails the ability to emotionally sensitize the others, the artistic genius having a

greater openness and sensitivity towards the emotional experience of the others. In the eighteenth century W. Duff distinguishes three faculties of the creative mind: imagination (based on associative mechanisms – divergent), judgment (connective ability – convergent), and taste (selectivity – elegance). Specialization and qualification involve creative abilities and intrinsic motivation (T. Amabile). Creativity involves evolutionary thinking and the updating of the personality by selecting among possibilities, possessing certain discreet competences.

The scope of **psychopathology** (pathological psychology), broadly-speaking, is similar to that of psychiatry; but in a limited sense, psychopathology, as a “border” discipline, situated between psychology and psychiatry, proposes to study and systematize the disorders of psychic processes, the consciousness and the morbid personality. In a first assessment, psychopathology can be defined by three characteristics:

- 1) it deals with the knowledge about the essential structures of the morbid personality and about the etiology of mental pathology;
- 2) from a theoretical and critical perspective, it encompasses all the aspects of the morbid psychic activity;
- 3) psychopathology tends to integrate its knowledge in the whole scientific knowledge about man.

One can distinguish a general psychopathology and a special psychopathology. **General** psychopathology comprises the theories, the conceptions and the hypotheses which attempt to explain the development of the psychic disorders in general, the psychic diseases, and the psychic or psychopathological effects of the various somatic diseases. General psychopathology is a theoretical field, par excellence, that attempts to solve the problem of the exo- and endogenesis of psychic diseases. **Special** psychopathology includes in its scope the study of psychic symptoms, both in the case of psychic diseases per se and in the case of somatic diseases. Special psychopathology studies the psychic symptoms induced by certain natural or experimental situations, and consists in explaining the nature of these manifestations, their phenomenology and their evolution. Psychopathology does not operate by considering the individual case; the research aims to describe and explain the disturbances of the psychic life (G. Ionescu).

The proven efficiency of the technique (of accepting the incredible confession) should be convincing enough to seriously consider Dr. H. Grivois’s hypothesis. Put in order, the impressive and disturbing experiences recounted by the patient create a quite exact picture of the primordial or “central” episode. To uncover its nature, we must go beyond the always partial and contradictory interpretations which the subject produces in the desperate attempt to give a sense to everything that he is offered and that seems to make no sense to him.

This contradictory experience is apparently exacerbated beyond any limit by reaching insanity, in a catastrophic impulse. Caught in this dual relationship with

the universal crowd of people, the subject oscillates between the most various (even opposed) interpretations: he thinks he is God, a sacred monster, or the crowd itself. But only taken together, these lectures and interpretations uncover the reality of the central episode. Delirium occurs only when one of the interpretations cancels all the others. At that point, psychosis inevitably occurs.

L. Blaga extends the field of experience to the art works: “The life forms or their creative principle become demonic when they affirm themselves with an exaltation which leads eventually to self-denial” (*Daimonion* L. Blaga, 1930, Cluj, Soc. de Măine Publishing House, *Orizont și stil*, 1935 then *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul culturii*, 1937; both parts of “Trilogia culturii” ELU 1969).

Modern psychiatry has converted the expression “lack of reason”, introducing the “mental disease” formula. The specialists have freed “the mad” from the chains that tied them in the traditional procedure and proposed the classification of mental disorders in psychoses and neuroses. Even if the current definition describes the patient’s disturbances, the theory remains incapable of explaining why the patient is alienated. Blaga, on the other hand, makes a significant, insightful remark: *The disease which incites to creation is, in fact, sanity of a higher order... Consequently, the doctors should have a less medical conception of the disease* (af-383-384, p.50, ED from *Povestea Aforismelor* by G.G. Constandache, Ed. Busines Press, 2004, Buc).

Let us return now to H. Ey (H. Ey, *Conștiința*, Ed.Șt. și Enc, Buc, 1983), who considers that the patient loses his own (ontological) self and borrows another one or builds for himself a socially inadequate self. This involves the reversal of the conscious and unconscious contents, the patient’s behavior being governed by the irrationality and the dominant fantasies and delusions existing in the unconscious. Here is a relevant aphorism in this sense: “Adolescence, with its sentimental and spiritual crises, represents a normal age, with its accompanying phenomena. When it lasts longer, breaking into the virtualities of maturity, adolescence is no longer an age, it is a disease” (p. 136, mss D). This idea parallels Blaga’s aesthetic preoccupations: “The spiritual crises and the tendency to indulge in these crises are a whim of adolescence and a luxury of decadence” (p. 135, mss D; L. Blaga, cf. loc. cit.).

For education, the cognitive mental processes and their mechanisms become objectives, targets of the formative processes, which aim to introduce the student in the reality of the science, of its construction, to educate him in view of continuing the scientific development, of assimilating and applying the scientific spirit in order to solve real-life problems, to help him, by meta-cognition, to know himself and to develop in this spirit. Even in this early stage of its development, **cognitive education** can contribute to the understanding of the epistemological grounds of pedagogy itself by providing clarifying information on the field, or foster an epistemic character in the educational practice itself, as a way to approach and

carry out the instructive-educative process, as a sign of professionalism and scientific endeavor.

Along with the cognitive psychology, informatics and the cognitive neurosciences form the basis for the development of cognitive education through the clarifications (J. Delacour, 2001) concerning: the explanation of the material-scientific basis of the cognitive activity (the nervous system functioning), the explanation of the motivation states, the clarification of the nervous system organization by making parallels with the artificial intelligence, the new interpretation of the information processing (representations – mental images, the mechanisms of thinking, learning, memory, imagination) etc. What is, then, the capacity of cognitive education in relation to the other types of education, to the expectations and the socio-cultural changes of the individuals involved, and how can this capacity be assessed?

The cognitive approach has emerged, besides the need to clarify the social and individual expectations regarding the sense of personality development, as a result of the shortcomings of the behaviorist theory when it comes to the accomplishment of certain objectives required by the evolution of these expectations: problem-solving, real-life situations, the assimilation of cognitive strategies, the support of the individual's role in the cognitive processes, the involvement of meta-cognition. Education should thus indicate solutions meant to introduce and prepare the child to build his knowledge and use it in real-life contexts (J. Dewey, J. Piaget, J. Bruner), to reach the point of optimum development through differentiated assistance (L. Vîgotki), to outline the new roles of the teacher in the support of this cognitive construction (facilitation, mediation, guidance, regulation). There is still need of a theoretical solution (essence, foundations, status, problematics), of a practical one (the integration in a curricular construction, the establishment of the objectives, the contents, the methodology, the assessment methods), as well as a spiritual – relational solution (attitudes, implementation in the context, management, research and development).

On an educational plane postmodernism would boil down to: the promotion of the new types of education, of the new moral, cultural and social values, of the educational alternatives, of the decisional and curricular decentralization, of the education in the spirit of freedom and creativity; it would also promote communication and the preparation for the postindustrial society, the permanent education, the education for change, the education for the information society...

In terms of the educational practice, there are three main directions that can be reconsidered from a postmodernist perspective: the educational strategies, the school curriculum and the educational communication. And the directions of modernization – of these and of other educational problems – that take shape today are in fact postmodernist solutions which are not, however, perceived as elements of contestation as pedagogy, in its essence, anticipates development, promotes the renewal, the continuous progress.

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