

Cellular Memory: Clinical Evidence

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Abstract: The author firstly expands on the meaning of cellular memory, explaining that it refers to the imprints that exist in the human mind of the whole process of the biological experience from preconception to birth. These early imprints, initially stored as sensory impressions, will later gain a mental representation when a mental apparatus will be available. She lays particular stress on the very first cellular experiences such as the sperm's journey in search of the egg, their finding each other and mating, the "destruction" of the sperm's original identity, the physiological rejection of the just conceived concept by the maternal immunological system due to the fact that it is a foreign body. She presents a case study with which she means to illustrate how much these early imprints – done by means of a cellular memory – will command and determine the behaviour of an adult female patient who has a strong impediment to mate.

Zusammenfassung: *Zelluläres Gedächtnis: klinischer Nachweis.* Die Autorin erläutert zunächst die Bedeutung des zellulären Gedächtnisses und erklärt, daß dieses sich auf die Eindrücke bezieht, die im menschlichen Geist von dem gesamten Prozeß der biologischen Erfahrungen von der Zeugung bis zur Geburt existieren. Diese frühen Eindrücke, die zuerst als sensorische Eindrücke gespeichert werden, gewinnen später eine mentale Repräsentation, wenn der mentale Apparat verfügbar ist. Sie betont besonders die allerersten zellulären Erfahrungen wie des Spermiums Reise auf der Suche nach dem Ei, wie beide einander finden und sich vereinen bis zur „Zerstörung“ der ursprünglichen Identität des Spermiums und der physiologischen Zurückweisung des neu empfangenen Konzepts durch das mütterliche Immunsystem, da es sich um einen fremden Körper handelt. Die Autorin präsentiert eine Fallstudie, um zu illustrieren, wie stark diese frühen Eindrücke, die mittels eines zellulären Gedächtnisses erfolgten, das Verhalten einer erwachsenen Patientin mit starker Einschränkung in der sexuellen Partnerschaft beherrschen und bestimmen.

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What is it that I mean when I refer to “cellular memory”?

I shall start by introducing you to the idea of cellular memory through the experience of Olivier and Varenka Marc, a couple of child analysts practicing in Paris, as reported in their book *“L'enfant qui se fait naître”* (1981) [“The child that gives birth to itself”]. In the book, they tell about Varenka’s analytical experience with a little girl who started analysis at eighteen months and went up to the end of her fourth year. The study of her drawings, assembled some time after her analysis was finished, set them on the track of understanding that this little girl had reproduced – through her drawings – all the biological process from her preconception to birth.

As an introduction to the book, they quote Robert Debré [from the French Academy of Science]: “Everything is memory. The living being feels and retains. The body never forgets”.

They begin stating: “When the child begins to walk, it begins to draw. What is it that the child is telling us? That it knows perhaps everything about its past: of its cellular, embryonic, foetal experience [...] We can hardly believe that such an embryological knowledge might be just simply registered in us. Doesn’t in fact the little girl draw the sperm and the egg, the cellular divisions; doesn’t she evoke the state of morula four days after conception, then the blastocyte one day later, then the gastrulation, first stage of the embryonic growth?” and so on.

Still quoting Marc, interviewed by Bernardo Martino [“Le bébé est une personne” (1985)]: Martino asks: “When do you consider that consciousness starts? Is it with the onset of speech? With birth? Before birth? At five months after conception? In your understanding, the child has a conscience of everything that happens in the mother’s womb and as to that, since the very beginning. But what sort of conscience is it?”

Olivier answers: “The more one tries to understand what is at the very origin of life, the more closer one gets to the body [...] When later on one sees, through its drawings, that the child has a conscience of what had happened there, one considers that if it was able to draw, it means that the child’s conscience was able to differentiate from the material substance. It still is a conscience that is not conscious. The child doesn’t say ‘this is what happened to me in my prenatal life’, but it expresses it spontaneously as something that its body sets into images. This means that a process of consciousness has been started (...) In other words, the body remembers, but cannot symbolize: it does it over again, in the sense of repeating. So when one looks at the drawings, one realizes that the child was expressing an experience which was not a conscious experience; it was an unconscious experience.”

Martino: “One may very well assume that life, as well as consciousness, starts at the moment of the ‘bang’ of the meeting of the sperm and egg; and that at that very moment begins a process of storage of memories in the little girl’s body, but before ... the sperm is not yet the little girl; it is just the father, as well as the egg is just the mother.”

Olivier: “There is no matter [substance] without a memory. In the domain of nature, everything is memory. The sperm is already a matter [substance], it already is life before life. I am not referring to conscience, but to memories. The sense of touch is the first of the senses; and since there is touch, there is memory. It would

seem that through its sensoriality, the body stores everything it has been through since the cellular stage.” [the underlining is mine].

I brought you this evidence given by Olivier Marc, based on his experience which allowed him to have such insights. I shall now state what I have been considering since 1983, having reached it through my own personal insights. You will see how much it coincides with what was quoted above.

What I consider as cellular memory – as I already stated here in Köln, at the 1998 Encounter – can be thus summarized:

- In the utmost depths of our minds, lays a basic matrix which contains the imprints, done by means of a cellular memory, of the whole process of our biological experience, from preconception to birth – that is, since the formation of each one of our two basic germinative cells – sperm and egg – up to the moment of birth.
- From this basic matrix derives the raw material of the unconscious phantasies.
- Thus phantasies are memories. They correspond to the psychical representations of the imprints of the early sense impressions, which are stored as raw material for thought, into which they will later be transformed when a mental apparatus, sufficiently developed, will be available.

And pertinent to the case material I shall be presenting:

- There is a trauma at conception.

Going further down to some more details on the constitution of this basic matrix, I wish to stress that the very earliest imprints of the basic matrix, refer to the experience of the two germinative cells: (a) what each of them underwent since its respective origin up to the moment of their mating; (b) the “relationship” established between the two cells, before, during and after this encounter; (c) the vicissitudes and torments undergone by what now became a “couple” – the concept – submitted to a violent struggle for life just after its first “birth”, because of the destructive attacks from its first environment, giving rise to “feelings” (sensations) of panic, threat of being destroyed, aborted.

In fact, physiological destructive substances produced by the mother’s body, are activated in order to eliminate this new life that has just been created, which now represents a foreign body, that the mother’s immunological system seeks to reject or expel.

Thus the moment of mating, of fusion and fulfillment may be experienced as joy for life being created; but it may also be felt – mostly on the sperm’s cellular memory side – as a moment of torture and destruction, in which he loses his previous identity: it loses its tail, its head swells four times its original size and then opens up to deliver its genetic code to the egg [as will be seen in the clinical material on page 14]. Depending on the sort of imprints that will prevail, this moment may stand for the place of a basic human trauma: the trauma of conception. If such is the case, the prevailing imprint will contain the message that the coming together of the two cells has the meaning of something that should not have been, a dangerous experience to be forever avoided; heterosexual mating as something dangerous, castrating, annihilating; something that causes great pain and destruction.

The place and moment of conception may in these cases also stand for being the place of origin of a feeling of guilt, both to the sperm's cellular memory – for having forsaken his kins in the field of death – and to the egg's cellular memory – for having “left its mother's home”, for having “married a stranger”, for having dared to face the unknown adventure of starting a new life on its own.

Among other things, this place may become the place of origin of autistic encapsulation.

These ideas may be found expanded in the appendix “Genesis”.

Now, in order to provide a better understanding of how I was led to the visualization of what I just presented, I shall briefly introduce the path I followed.

In the mid seventies, the ideas of the English psychoanalyst Dr. Wilfred Bion, were starting to be known in Brazil. From 1973 onward, he himself visited Brazil once a year, for lectures and seminars, until 1978. Thus, I had the opportunity to share some of Dr. Bion's experience through supervisions, clinical seminars, lectures and in 1979, through a short-time individual analysis with him in Los Angeles. These contacts with Bion and his ideas changed my whole approach to the understanding of the psychoanalytical experience and session. I started looking at it as an encounter of two minds, following the biological model of conception, whose outcome was meant to be the discovery of the unknown.

I then observed surprising and curious situations: while I would offer my mind to be used as an available mental space to contain the mind of the analysand, in order to help him process his concealed “unknown”, I started noticing that: (a) the analysand would either start acting destructively towards this space and function put at his disposal, instead of keeping his communication at the level of free association as I had been taught to expect him to do, or (b) he would behave in a treacherous way, misleading me by producing false material to be “interpreted”, or (c) he would withdraw into an ‘autistic’ protective shield, or (d) he would turn against any positive gain from our psychoanalytical work and attack it destructively. I was puzzled.

The available psychoanalytical theories were of little help to really understand and handle such situations in order to achieve psychic change. What I was offered were worn out Kleinian or Bionian theoretical notions referring to greed, envy or an urge to destroy. Such interpretations would not produce any real effect or mental change. I realized their ineffectiveness to undo the psychopathological patterns. They were merely descriptive.

I felt an urge to reach beyond the surface. I wanted to understand what was it that produced such destructive mental movements. I wanted to understand the origin of envy, of the psychotic part of the mind, of the attacks on linking, of the perverse part of the personality. I wondered why would a mind avoid mating with another mind? What sort of pain was feared and avoided? Why would a mind suddenly retreat and hide beneath a sort of protective shield? Where did it come from? What was its origin?

I had at my disposal years of listening to Bion's contributions communicated through metaphors. To start with, it was a matter of deciphering the metaphors. And so I tried to do.

Eventually I came to realize, through clinical observation and also by deciphering my personal insights, that the mind was reediting, when brought into contact

with another mind, the experience of the biological conception of that particular individual – the circumstances of the getting together of the two germinative cells – and that the impediments that arose for the achievement of the psychoanalytical encounter were difficulties which reproduced some traumatic event that had occurred and been experienced at the moment of conception, having been imprinted – by means of a cellular memory – on the unconscious matrix of that mind.

I realized that the psychoanalytical setting and encounter favoured the appearance of patterns of behaviour – that were once biological, and now were just mental – registered on deep protomental furrows, which would emerge in the here-and-now of the psychoanalytical experience, because they were imprints of traumatic, hence not-digested, experiences that had established points of trauma which turned out impeditive for the development of normal mental growth.

I therefore realized that the psychopathological patterns which I was facing in my psychoanalytical practice when the two of us – the analysand and me – came together to accomplish something [psychoanalysis/ psychoanalytic understanding] must have originated much beyond the time and place to which the current theories would attribute their origin. They were manifestations of something very early and very primitive, belonging to the prenatal period of that existence.

I then put forward the hypothesis that the destructive performance in which my patient's mind would occasionally engage, was a way of telling about things that had happened to him, and were imprinted on his unconscious mind, since a time where there was no access to verbal speech nor verbal thought. I realized that the patient was telling me, through this acted out language of communication, of some terrible experience that had happened to him at the very beginning of his biological existence; somewhere on the way from preconception to birth.

I also realized that this sort of “acting out” could be looked upon as a “Rosetta Stone” of early primitive imprints and could thus mean a precious and valuable source of information. It could represent an important tool for grasping the meaning of communications about very early life-threatening experiences that had been registered only on a sensorial level. They represented a knowledge that the mind did not “know” about. They were there, imprinted on its basic unconscious matrix, passing valuable informations concerning something very threatening that had once happened to that self. Something the self felt an urge to “know about” now, in order to be able to transform it into thoughts and thus deal with it mentally, working it through. Otherwise it would go on reappearing, repeating compulsively its auto or hetero destructiveness.

Through deciphering my counter-transferential feelings and reactions aroused either by the patient's projective identifications or some other dissociative mental process, I realized that in the here-and-now of the analytical encounter, sometimes the role of the patient's once endangered, suffering or victimized self – either as sperm, or concept, embryo or fetus – would be assigned to me.

Thus, through this new way of looking at the analysand-analyst interaction in the analytical process, a new light could be thrown on the meaning of the negative therapeutic reactions in psychoanalysis. The disruptive mental movements and attacks on analysis, on the analytical link, on its products or achievements, could be looked upon as reeditions of very early prenatal traumatic experiences

imprinted by the concept or fetus, feeling threatened of being annihilated, aborted or destroyed.

All these being situations that the patient is unable to communicate through verbal free association, as classical psychoanalysis would consider proper – because his mind does not “know” about them. The only language he can employ to convey such early experiences, is acting them out in the transference.

Proceeding with the introduction, I still want to add another piece of information which also is pertinent to the clinical material I shall present.

At the Third Pre and Perinatal Psychology International Conference [San Francisco, CA, 1987], the Canadian psychotherapist Josephine Van Husen presented a paper, “Uterine Hazards and their Postnatal Consequences”, in which – among many other interesting contributions – she told about her experience with ultrasound images that revealed the existence of multiple conceptions that were seen at four weeks of gestation and would disappear, having been absorbed, around the sixth or seventh week. She presented also the evidence she had from patients submitted to hypnosis, of the existence of mnemonic traces of this experience left over on their minds – the survivors of such events.

At this same Conference, I learned from Graham Farrant’s lecture on “The Blighted Twin Syndrome”, of Dr. Helain Landy’s paper on “The Vanishing Twin”. This paper is also mentioned by Alessandra Piontelli in her book “From Foetus to Child” (1992): “Recent evidence indicates that twin pregnancies occur more often than the number of twins observed at birth would suggest. Recent data from ultrasound screening early in gestation suggest that the death of one twin in utero is not infrequent. Ultrasound scanning studies increasingly provide evidence of the phenomenon known as ‘The Vanishing Twin’ [Landy, 1982], whereby early detection of twins seems to be followed, later, by the disappearance of one of the components of the pair [. . .] One twin is usually less favoured than the other, who grows almost at its expense, and in some extreme cases this can actually lead to the death of the co-twin.”

Having stated all this I shall now turn to the clinical material that I selected for this presentation. What made me choose this clinical material was a particular dream, to which I shall refer as the cellular memory [cellular telephone] dream [p.13]. In order to give you the context in which this dream came up, I have to present a certain sequence of sessions in which the issues expressed by the dream started showing up in the analytical process. They happened not merely in the patient’s unconscious but through an exchange between the analytical pair: the patient and myself.

Therefore there will be a crucial analytical moment that will be enhanced [p.13].

One more thing to be signaled as being peculiar to this analytical process: there was a great alternation in the patient’s mental states. She would sometimes be “alive”, in close contact with her emotional experience, capable of maintaining the analytical contact going on, or she would shut herself in a rock of ice, and would remain in this mental state for a large period of time.

The patient, Cecily, 37 years old, can hardly be thought of as being a “young woman”, because she looks so much like a young girl, almost a teen-ager. She first came to see me four years ago, because her mother had recently died and she felt

at loss. During the first year of analysis, we mainly dealt with the issue of opening her own eyes and perception in order to enable her to think by herself. As she had been absolutely subdued to her mother's will and opinion, she had "detached her own head off and in its place had bolted her mother's head on" – as I would put it to her.

The mother, a very authoritarian, strongly willed and rigid person, had totally got under the skin of my patient who developed towards this maternal figure a worship one encounters in religious fanatical groups towards a leader. "She was everything to me", I heard my patient state at one time in a very poignant way. They lived in a small town in the country, where the father was administrator of a rural property. Both parents were of European origin, the father having had a very good education in one of the best private schools in town. Mother came from her country of origin, to marry him. My patient was the youngest child of six [five daughters and one son].

As a small child she had heard her mother telling about her not having been wanted, because the parents had already had all the children they had planned. Presumably, there must have been talks between the parents – at the beginning of the pregnancy – as to its interruption, "overheard" by the patient. Cecily became her mother's favorite daughter; she remembers her mother saying that she wished her never to grow up and thus remain at her side forever as a little girl. An interesting thing to note is how strongly and concretely did Cecily take her mother's wishes, adhering to them in a fanatic way.

On a certain occasion, when we were talking about her identity and her difficulty to establish it, she said in a poignant manner: "When I was about four, I remember once being in the car with my mother who was driving, and I was nagging her because I wanted a sweet. My mother, putting her hand on her purse, said to me: 'You don't have wishes of your own. Your will is here, shut inside my purse. I am the one who knows and determines what is it that you want'." This statement penetrated so strongly my patient's soul, that to develop an identity of her own and proceed on a path of her own, became an impossibility.

Two years ago she met a man a little older than herself, unhappily married, with two children to whom he was absolutely devoted, a very responsible and loving father. He lived in the same house with his family, but had no marital life with his wife, sleeping in a separate room.

He fell in love with Cecily. She fell in love with him. But soon after the "honeymoon", the first weeks of enchantment, I started noticing that she was always looking for some reason to use as an argument that things weren't going as they should and that the relationship could not go on. So, when it had turned into a serious relationship, Cecily started looking for reasons to break it up.

It became quite evident that she could not break her original commitment to her mother. She had to remain single, devoted to the mother's habits, strict and rigid rules. She was "forbidden" to constitute a heterosexual couple, which would mean "leaving" her original home and family and starting a family of her own.

I shall now roughly trace the steps that brought the process to the analytical moment that I shall enhance [p.13].

Taking notes after a certain session, I wrote: there is in her a "dead aspect". [...] Could there have been a dead twin? Or, could there have been a situation

in which she had to pretend she was dead in order not to be noticed? In order not to be attacked, aborted? I was reminded of the issues brought up by Van Husen in her lecture: the issue of not wanting to grow, dead twins, multiple conceptions. This was the first time that something of the kind drew this sort of pattern inside me, brought up by something emanating from her. I also wrote that such a hypothesis would perhaps answer for the drowsiness that I had been feeling during her sessions while I wondered what could be bringing this up. I had never understood what this was, why did I succumb to sleep: it could happen in the middle of a communication of hers, or just after an interpretation given by me.

At next day's session, she tells about how what we had talked on the previous day had repercutated on her; she explains that she was referring to prenatal, intra-uterine, issues. And expands on this. Then she tells about the difficulties she had always had with sex, and to get sexually aroused. She mentions a dream that was recurrent during her childhood: There were many women, they were all undressed, their bodies were naked, and each of them was imprisoned in a cell.

This brought to my mind the image of multiple conceptions.

A: I tell her that nowadays we dispose of a knowledge – due to ultrasound – we did not have access to in the past. Then I tell her about the multiple conceptions: several eggs fertilized by several sperms: mother's organism either expelled them or absorbed them, leaving but one who was the "I" survivor. I expand on: having been conceived had for her a meaning of much suffering and this extended to a horror of conception which is the result of sexual intercourse.

Next session:

P: Remember the issue of multiple conceptions? On Friday, I went swimming and when I put my head under the water, it came to me clearly . . . me inside the womb . . . and it is very strange . . .

A: What is very strange?

P: I had already forgotten all about this, and then all of a sudden, with my head under the water, this thing came . . .

A: What thing?

P: This is something I didn't remember anymore. And when you mentioned it, it made much sense to me . . .

I observe her drying her tears. I ask her why.

P: Because it was not by the way of reason. It is like entering an old house in which you already once lived and you look around and what once seemed very big is in fact much smaller than what you remembered.

The dream of the naked feminine bodies, shut in cells, comes to my mind; I then tell her that what I had said had been stirred by the dream she had told me of the feminine naked bodies, shut each one in a cell.

Silence . . . She comes out of her silence:

P: I spent a very pleasurable week-end, so peaceful. On Saturday we went to . . . to watch the moon . . . [. . .] Remember when once you said that B. saw things in me that I myself was unable to see . . . ?

A: My description of the disappearance of the multiple concepts as being a natural phenomenon, seemed to have relieved her guilt. She now felt she was entitled to enjoy and have pleasure; she deserved it.

At the next session the freezing is present again. She speaks, I feel drowsy.

Weeks pass. I take my vacations.

First session after vacations:

P: She spent the holidays with B. at the farm of her parents' friends. She slept in the same room and bed her parents used to occupy. Since then she started feeling sick with heavy nausea and vomiting.

A: I explore the presence of her mother with all the prejudices she had against having as boy-friend a married man. The risen conflict, etc.

P: My mother was everything to me . . .

She misses next day's session, having forgotten about it . . .

A month later, the sickness goes on: nausea and vomiting. She can't stand B's presence. Analytic material related with her having an insight of a peculiar aspect in her behaviour, comes to the surface; she realizes that she destroys things and situations all of a sudden: when I met B, we were working here in analysis on this peculiarity of mine: I start things, start building them up, and then all of a sudden I destroy them before they are finished.

A: I say something that surfaces instantaneously to my mind: Abortion.

P: She remembers of a scientific event she had organized: she left the place before the end of the event, hurrying home; she had felt a sudden and terrible headache.

We talk about a feeling of sacredness related to everything that had to do with her mother, and the conflict which was brought up when the path of life collided with something of the "sacred" established by mother. To go against her mother's "culture" [ways and rules], resulted in the vomiting and the nausea.

A screen memory brought through associative material puts me again on the track of the threat of being aborted:

P: She referred to the episode of when they [the whole family; she was four at that time] had been forced to leave home, the house in which she was born. It was on her grandfather's rural property that her father administrated; the grandfather sold it suddenly without consulting his son and not considering that there was a whole family with six small children living in it and depending economically from it. They had no place to go.

A: I considered this material as being a screen-memory containing a previous situation for which she had no representation, just an imprint: of feeling the threat of being removed from her mother's womb, aborted. The sensation of something provisory, not definitive¹, related to this: "I am here for just a little while; at any moment I shall be removed, aborted." I then understood that the situations she broke up and interrupted before they were ready stood for dramatizations of the threat of being aborted, the threat of being removed from inside her mother's womb [as embryo or foetus, having overheard – and imprinted – her mother's words with the meaning: "let's get rid of this pregnancy, I shall have an abortion, I will not keep this baby"]].

A few sessions later, she expresses the wish to diminish the number of sessions. She then tells a dream: She dreamt that she was at the farm and was in danger because she was denouncing some drugdealers who were selling drugs.

A: I understood that here in the analysis she was denouncing her inner mafia which wanted to keep her addicted to the destructive drug.

By the end of the session she reveals what had made her want to interrupt analysis:

P: I gained new glasses here in analysis and these new lenses make me see things that I couldn't see before . . . this question related to the feeling of lack of permanence that I understood here the other day . . .

Some days later:

P: she wants a life project for herself, something that – when she will be old – will make her feel that she had lived a life worth living: having married, built a family, had kids of her own.

The sequence of our verbal intercourse results in her realizing that she doesn't have to wait for B's divorce to get pregnant. As there is a certain urgency due to her age, she can get pregnant right away.

Next day she tells me about the conversation she had with B, who reacted with great joy to the idea of her getting pregnant. She then had a dream, which caused her a great impression:

The dream: "There were lots of people, like in a concentration camp, they were agonizing. But some of them were still alive. And then there was one from whom I was pulling out the spinal column. And somebody asks me why was I doing this, and I answer that the spinal column is essential for a person to stand erect". When she finishes telling the dream, she comments: "Impossible to put together yesterday's joy with this dream."

It came to my mind that there could be no joy if there is so much to be mourned.

A: Very carefully, I say that I have a hypothesis and that we shall see whether it will make any sense to her. I tell her about the multiple conceptions that are assimilated by the mother's body or are eliminated. I speak about the struggle for life of the surviving twin who fights for space and nourishment with his co-twin. I mention that nowadays these things are well known, can be seen and spotted through ultrasound images: it has been seen happening, the struggle for life and the defeat of one of the twins, with the victory of the other one. I end saying: "It might have been that you went through a situation such as this." I mention her feeling of guilt which has been an impediment for her to enjoy life, of being happy, of making progress, being successful. I point out to her how, in analysis, every good session which brought her insights and made her progress, was followed by several frozen sessions. I expand on what can be seen as natural, once it is biological at this prenatal period: the millions of sperms who die to allow one to survive; of one twin killing the other. All this is absolutely natural, it is the law of nature, the law that rules the right to fight for one's own life. Still guilt remains all the same and it prevents one to rejoice and benefit from progress and success. I recall her experience when she felt a terrible headache and had to drop everything and quit, without benefitting of her success.

P: she starts crying and associates with the gynecological surgery she had undergone immediately after her mother's death, to remove a uterine septum, because she didn't want the septum to harm a virtual baby.

A: Bion's words come to my mind: "You cannot forget something you don't remember. So first of all you have to remember and then you can forget. Un-forget what is forgotten."

I say to her: "We need to bury all the dead ones from your past who have not been buried". I mention the working-through we did over her mother's death, but we didn't have a chance to do the same with these dead ones of a further past. These were bits deposited at the very bottom of her being and from there – in spite of it being something so deep and unconscious – emanated a power, an energy, which governed her life from such a very distant place. I mention the situation when she broke an engagement a short time before the wedding; all the situations of professional success from which she could never benefit: she quit jobs for reasons that were never clear to her, as if there existed in her a forbiddance, an interdiction, an impediment.

P: When I called the gynecologist today to make the appointment I said to the nurse that the urge was to get pregnant and on the date of my appointment I wrote down in my agenda "twins". I always tell B. that we are going to have twins and that their names will be L. and M.

A: These twins stand for the twins who had not been able to survive, as a reparation.

She agrees.

The Crucial Analytical Moment

At next day's session she reports a dream to which I shall refer as the cellular telephone / memory dream:

P: I was with a bunch of friends and my cellular telephone started ringing². They passed the telephone from hand-to-hand, until finally it comes to my hands and I then realize that it is not my cellular telephone, it does not belong to me; and then it stops ringing.

A: The claims of those that had not been attended – the dead of the past – those who were responsible for her interrupting things, those who did not allow her to marry, now that they have been taken care of and duly buried, will stop ringing and disturbing her. I call her attention to the formulation – "cellular telephone" –, because what I had been talking about the previous day referred to the cellular memory: the cellular telephone would stop ringing now.

P: At this very moment she complains of a very strong pain in her head, which has been getting stronger since I started speaking.

What had come to my mind was that it was the cellular telephone/memory of the twin or twins that was ringing, that was calling, not hers. And the twins' cellular telephones stopped ringing because they had been identified, their identity acknowledged, it had been worked through, and he/them twin[s] were buried, so the memory was deactivated, allowing her to desidentify herself from the dead ones.

Next day:

P: dream: I had two cellular telephones and I was trying to speak with somebody through them, but I couldn't. She concludes her communication: that is exactly how I feel: all alone. [...] I am unable to connect with anyone. Again she starts looking for reasons to break the engagement with B.

I realized that she was feeling "all alone" because she had been left by the shadows of the dead, who had kept her company all her life.

Recent session (February, 2002). In my notes I wrote:

We had got stuck in arid soil. Sometimes there is a slight movement, but immediately the aridity sets in again. In our analytical relationship today, I was able to collect some precious "gems". She was considering her difficulties of relating [to her boy-friend & to me]. At a certain point she says:

P: I have to watch carefully everything that I say and that I hear; I "analyse" it carefully.

A: I understand that she has a constant "watching police" examining everything that comes in, in order to avoid any subversive material that might cause damage to the fascist and authoritarian state and set in a democratic state which would allow her to go on developing and growing up.

She answers:

P: This would mean that I am giving myself in (...) it is as if I was delivering what I have in me, I will become empty, have no more left for myself. If I give affection, I will remain without any. I know it is not so, but that is how I feel.

A: You feel that when here you give me your associations it empties you and leaves you without anything. I suggest that it is something very ancient, from the very beginning of your existence, from the moment when the sperm entered the egg and delivered the genetic material, its DNA, offering it to the egg; it became empty and the egg grew big and strong. While it was emptied and disappeared, the other developed, flourished. That made it feel that it was being exploited and sucked to the other's benefit. It left it without anything, filling the other, getting rich at its expense while it became poor, was undone and disappeared. Never again will it be what it once had been. It was a transformation, because you resulted from it; but from the sperm's standpoint it was felt as being its destruction and disappearance forever. So when here you do not associate and do not give me your material, it is in this very sense: not to give me anything, so that I shall not benefit from what you say, from what you give me. Because you experience it as if it would make yourself become empty and I shall grow up, develop and multiply.

P: she agrees and answers: Yes, and thus there is no fecundation.

I presume that the clinical material I just presented gives you an idea of how the imprints done on the cellular memory level find expression in adult mental life and how this issue can be dealt with in an analysis.

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