

Working with Psychosis: Analysis of Transference Elements in Drawings and Relationships

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Abstract

The encounter with psychosis allows the therapist to face the *original chaos*, the *prima materia*, the Unconscious in its purest state, without any mediation by the reflective function. The mind of the analyst can be overwhelmed by a large quantity of stimulus, both affective and cognitive, which hinders his/her ability to understand 'what is happening' in the session. Psychosis is usually recognized as an attempt to attack 'the thinking function' of the analyst. Concepts like projection, inner and outer world, fantasy, imagery, consciousness and unconsciousness, reality and unreality and so on should help the analyst to understand the mind of his/her patient. When working with psychiatric patients, whether hospitalized or under supervision in a day care setting, such 'deep unconscious communications' are multiplied as the patients have to deal constantly with many different professional figures, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, etc. As a consequence of the dissociation which distinguishes these types of patients there is a fragmentation in the setting, with each professional figure carrying a different aspect of the transference and countertransference. A split in the transference is normally considered a disadvantage in the analytical process. In the present case it was an event which enabled the patient to communicate the contents of his/her delirium.

In the present paper I show how it was possible to exit from the confused state of mind which was dominating the patient, and work out transference and countertransference elements as they appeared in drawings and in other significant relationships such the one with the nurse and my own relationship with the staff.

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