



Studi psicanalitici della famiglia e della coppia

MODEL OF THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Our theoretical model of orientation was developed by **Paolo Sacconi**, psychoanalyst, founding member of Centro Studi di Psicoterapia di via Ariosto, Milan, Italy. He dedicated a very important part of his clinical, research and didactic work to the teaching of family and couple psychotherapy with a psychoanalytic imprint. This orientation was then extended with the conceptualizations of **Joseph and Anne Marie Sandler**, of the Anna Freud Centre of London.

The main points of the very rich theoretical conceptualization of J. and A.M. Sandler to which we refer also for the joint therapy (Sandler J. e A.M Sandler, *Gli oggetti interni, una rivisitazione*, F. Angeli, Milano, 2002) can be summarized as follows:

- The desires and the unconscious mechanisms of an individual are represented intrapsychically, in a descriptive way, by unconscious images and fantasies in which the self and the object who interact are represented in particular roles.
- The loss of emotional homeostasis, due to causes which are internal or external to the individual, constitutes the motor of desire, understood as the aspiration to reestablish that feeling of lost safety, desire that contemplates a representation of the Self in a satisfying interaction with the representation of the object.
- Everyone tends to maintain or to recreate the basic **feeling of safety and well-being** in the form experimented in the early relationship with the mother.
- This feeling of safety derives from a specific intrapsychic and unconscious relationship that the individual tends to actualize in masked forms through **perceptual identity**. He or she reaches this by inducing the other person, through subtle and masked attempts, to behave in the particular way that is necessary to recreate the familiar intrapsychic role relationship.

The desire or the fantasy of desire seeks satisfaction through perceptual identity, an experience which is perceptually identical to that which had been a source of satisfaction in the past.

This experience is actualization, an acting on oneself or on the “real” or “actual” world in such a way that the perception manages to coincide with the desired reality.

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There are various forms of actualization: (ho tolto “there is”) illusory actualization, delirious actualization, hallucinatory actualization and symbolic actualization through dreams, day dreams, neurotic symptoms, character traits, choice and the object relationship.

In various parts of their work, both Sandler confirm that these manipulations and provocations happen every day and with different amounts in all relationships.

- The recreation of the feeling of well-being and safety can come about through the separation-individuation process: this is the healthiest of the adaptive modalities enabling the individual to make use of his or her own actual resources to experiment the pleasure of functioning while tolerating at the same time the pain of knowing one’s own limits.
- The individual, however, is not always capable of tolerating the psychic pain derived from this process. The feeling of well-being and safety will be recreated by means of the specific modality that took place in preceding occasions. It will be one of the defense mechanisms described by A. Freud but it could also be a **symptom**. (J. Sandler e coll, *La ricerca in psicoanalisi*, Boringhieri, Torino, 1980)
- Regarding the patient-therapist relationship, Sandler’s attention was especially addressed to the countertransference as an unconscious adherence on the part of the analyst to the induction of the patient. But Sandler also affirms that “role responsiveness... is verified both inside and outside analysis... the tendency to actualization is part of the satisfaction of desire in all object relationships” (Sandler J. e A.M Sandler, *Gli oggetti interni, una rivisitazione*, F. Angeli, Milano, 2002, p. 83)

Saccani and Sandler have especially examined the choice of the partner occurring after an accurate operation of “trial” and exploration to verify if the other person has significant attributes of an important figure from the past and is available to actualize that particular type of relationship capable of currently satisfying that desire or fantasy of desire through role responsiveness.

Therefore, in the same way as in dreams, the manifested relationship can be considered a derivative of an underlying role relationship in a fantasy of the satisfaction of desire. Desire which is often radically modified, in its path toward the surface, through the use of defense mechanisms among which are also considered projective identification (M. Klein) and the (metaphoric) use of the object as a “container” (Bion).

Nevertheless, only the capability of developing an unconscious “work of comprehension” like the one occurring while dreaming through the centripetal process brings to the actualization of obtaining the satisfaction of desire.

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From this complex and profound theoretical and clinical contribution, Paolo Saccani started to develop his therapeutic technique focused on the analysis of the couple through the use of joint sessions. He considered this possible whenever an individual psychotherapy seemed to be impossible and when there were two fundamental requirements:

- an emotional investment from both members of the couple
- a curiosity to understand the significance of the other person in one's own inner world.

Our task is to analyze and understand with both partners their own desires and needs they have tried to actualize through their relationship and to identify the intervening changes and the source of such changes. This way we can recognize the current desires of both and the possibility of obtaining an adequate satisfaction through a new style of relating one another, experimented and reinforced in the therapeutic relationship.

Specifically, through the relationship that takes place between them and together with us, we encourage them both to recognize each other as a **“separate subject”**, with their inner worlds, their experiences, their mental states, their individual and family stories, with their own centers of initiative and agents of their own desires.

This continuous fluctuation between experiencing the other as “object”, with the function of satisfying one's own needs and the other as “separate subject”, can become the basis for a new relationship between the two partners, helping them to reach new goals close to the current representation of Self and source of the feelings of safety and well-being.

Paolo Saccani chose to promote the development of his theory and clinical and research methodology by training other people and this immediately led to a School as part of Centro Studi di via Ariosto in Milan, Italy.

After his death in 2000, we formed, together with a group of his own trainees, the Association that takes his name with the intention to pursue research and exchanges both within the Association and elsewhere on psychoanalytic psychotherapy with couples and families.