

“ To forgive in order to forget. I do not want to relive the past. I want to experience the present. ”

–Louise Bourgeois

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IPA President Stefano Bolognini was interviewed on 4 September, 2013 by Filippo La Porta. The interview entitled ' Everything you every wanted to know about psychoanalysis' originally appeared in the online journal: [Europa Quotidiano](#).

The interview has been translated by members of the IPA into:

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Everything you every wanted to know about psychoanalysis.

In an interview with Stefano Bolognini, the first Italian to be elected as President of the IPA (International Psychoanalytical Association), I asked him everything I had ever wanted to know, and had never asked before, about psychoanalysis.

People say, "I'm in analysis ...", but they have really only started psychotherapy. What is the fundamental difference between the two? The difference is the same as the difference between two people living together or seeing each other once a week. In analysis, apart from the setting (couch instead of chair), the frequency contributes to the depth of exploration and the emotional bond between analyst and patient. It is a "psychic cohabitation".

Psychoanalysis is a cultural fact, a combination of psychological theories about certain aspects of human mental functioning, but primarily it is a form of therapy. Does it make sense to enter into analysis purely as an intellectual adventure and a learning experience? Thirty years ago, when many intellectuals undertook analysis to enrich their inner world, rather than heal themselves through change, very often they discovered that intellectualization could be, at least in part, a defense. This no longer happens now: analysis requires an economic sacrifice that was more sustainable in the past, and people "kid themselves" much less now, going straight to the heart of the matter: that is, to the suffering and the need.

Psychoanalysis serves to understand some of the problems of the individual, but why is it used often, and inappropriately, to understand society? The application of psychoanalysis to the lives of groups and societies began in 1921, when Freud wrote Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. The model of individual psychic life cannot be applied verbatim to the psychology of society as a whole; nevertheless, certain analogies between certain psychic and fantasmatic structures of large groups and those of an individual cannot be denied either. The quality of these observations depends on

who makes them ..

In psychoanalysis, psyche prevails over morals. The psychoanalyst tends not to judge. In Italy, as Flaiano said, we have only one enemy, "the referee in football matches, because he passes judgment." Could all this deresponsibilize us? In the context of perversion, the confusion between good and evil is strategically manipulated so as to disorient the subject and make him lose his inner contact with these basic distinctions. The technique of psychoanalysis calls for 'suspension', in anticipation of the patient's associations. To be able to open themselves up to the exploration of their own inner life, patients need to feel listened to with impartiality. However, when the confusion has a perverse origin, the analyst must clarify the dynamics of all this. Psychoanalysis requires the patient to take conscious responsibility: for example, a patient is not "guilty" of their repressed or conscious desires, if they do not act on them; but they are "responsible" for them, and as they mature they recognize their presence and meaning. They may wish to kill their enemy (we cannot "decide" feelings and fantasies), but they will have to, responsibly, not do so.

Psychoanalysis gives each of us the thrill of taking centre stage. The analyst turns our very existence into a compelling narrative. Isn't there a risk that this gratifies people's narcissism?

Yes, but in many cases this is exactly what some less evolved parts of patients need. In most cases, it is not about pampering a narcissist, but rather bringing value and a sense of self to people (or those inner parts of them) who did not have a receptive container during their developmental stage. Then, alongside these, there are the real narcissists: they will find precisely the opposite response in terms of technique, aimed at making them aware of their demeanor and transforming it.

I've never entered into analysis because I am suspicious of the unequal relationship with the analyst, who "naturally" tends to abuse their power. The relationship is not equal and it cannot and should not be so, because the analyst has a fundamental functional responsibility in working with the patient. However, on a human level there is absolute equality between the two: they are two people, and must treat each other as such.

What happens, in a planned way, in the course of the psychoanalytic relationship, has happened normally for centuries, and has been 'generated, with joyous spontaneity, from devotion and affection' (Adorno), without the need for the "artifice" of sessions and their liturgy. Before Freud, was humanity really so much worse off?

Psychoanalysis, when it is carried out properly, is a more focused and aware way of providing the individual with what they need to grow. There are many people who know how to relate to others with depth and empathy, which are precious natural gifts. But psychoanalytic empathy is technically another thing: it has a different technical complexity, for example, it involves tuning into different parts of the patient that are at odds with each other, such as affection and hatred felt at the same time towards the same person ...

Are there other ways besides psychoanalysis to process suffering, such as dance (as the psychoanalyst Elvio Fachinelli once told me)?

Yes, there are other ways, which differ from case to case and which can greatly help a person. However, they exert a different and more localized effect, and sometimes no more than superficial. These activities can be useful, but they are rarely truly transformative in a structural and lasting sense.

For some therapists today the unconscious has almost dissolved: people do not repress or erase anything anymore (the Super Ego does not forbid us anything, on the contrary it encourages us to indulge, because this increases consumerism). So our problem is not so much how to "liberate ourselves" as how to strengthen an increasingly fragile Ego.

Yes, that's true. Not in the sense that the unconscious does not exist anymore at all, but in the sense that it is less repressed, while the central ego is weaker, more fragmented and confused. In the past, people needed to get rid of an oppressive Super Ego, whereas today they need to reintegrate, to find reliable "objects" (in the sense of people and relationships) and be able to build relationships with common sense and consistency. Modern man is often arrogant, confused and frankly much more needy than one thinks.