

## Polyphonies in analysis: the primary symbolization processes<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In this article we propose to discuss different forms of communication existing in the psychoanalytical clinic, beyond verbal language, based on primary symbolization processes and the importance of amplifying the analyst's listening. Based on the writings of René Roussillon, we enter the field of intersubjectivity to reflect on a differentiated listening that will be required by the analyst for enabling the reception of different forms of communication. In these cases, something beyond the word becomes audible, revealing faults concerning the work of representation, so that more archaic symbolization processes emerge endowed with other voices, as an attempt to theoretically expand the scope of symbolization and representation.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalytic clinic, nonverbal communication, René Roussillon.

### Introduction

The question of communication and what is audible in the psychoanalytic clinic has been present since the beginning of psychoanalysis with Freud himself, who could “hear” behind the classic symptoms of hysteria some different fragment of history from that subject's life, told by a body that goes beyond the senses of the biological. Taking into account the existence of an anatomy proper to psychoanalysis, which rests on the biological body but moves away from it to enter another logic, that of representation (Fédida, 1971), we would like to emphasize the fact that the body of psychoanalysis takes into account the fantasies that are unique to each of us, created from a unique and singular history. We can say that, instead of a descriptive stagnation present in the hysterical cases of that time, Freud found in these patients true “scenes” that told a piece of history that had been segregated from the psyche, using the body as a stage.

From the cases of hysteria and other neuroses, Freud realized the existence of another level of communication present between the lines of the words narrated by the patients. At first, the other's subjective discourse became the scene of a narrative subversion: what the subject spoke was not exactly what he meant. And from there came the theorizations of parapraxis, dreams, jokes and other news of a language that did not come from a discourse of the reason, so praised at the time, but from embarrassing remains that denounced another master to which the man submitted: the Unconscious. From

this moment on, the analyst starts to “hear” the contents coming from the Unconscious and interpret them, helping the patient to understand where his sufferings came from, enabling new, less harmful formations.

Just as Freud, through clinical experiences, rethought and modified his theory, so did other psychoanalysts. Different theorists reformulated the theory of psychoanalytic practice, especially from cases that they thought did not fit the classic Freudian model of neurosis. In these cases something else became audible, something that escaped the common communicability of psychoanalytic interpretation. From the emergence of a larger number of these patients considered difficult, who struggle to respond to the classical technique, we realize that the representation work cannot always be considered as finished taken for granted, leading to revisions and modifications of the theoretical framework.

In order to think about new forms of communicability in the clinic beyond verbal language, André Green (1975/1988) compiled in his article “The analyst, symbolization and absence in the analytical setting” some elements that would denounce a sort of “crisis of psychoanalysis”. The author suggests that late twentieth-century analysts would increasingly be faced with psychopathological conditions for which the Freudian classical technique of interpretation would not provide the necessary tools to assist.

Green highlights the shift from a theoretical-clinical model based on neurosis – in which the analyst came across repressed contents that returned – to a model closer to psychosis – in which more radical defenses, below the level of representation, will appear and be preponderant. This does not mean that neurotic patients were replaced by psychotic ones, but that psychotic nuclei (which may be present in any patient) are now audible by analysts, in a way they were not before. In the same direction, Souza (2013) points to a “deneurotization” of psychoanalysis starting

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from theories that address an earlier moment of subjectivity constitution, focusing on the development of symbolization processes. This movement occurs from a substitution of the reference pathology for clinical thinking, slipping from classical neurosis to psychotic and/or borderline processes.

Thus, we can think that the change in the psychoanalytic clinic evoked by the authors would be of the order of listening and understanding of the analyst, who began to hear contents that used not to be audible, making it clear that there is something of nonverbal communication that escapes the patient that would now be available and impossible to ignore. In this sense, Green (1975/1988) points out, the verbal content that the patient communicates in the analysis is no longer understood as the totality of material to which the analyst must pay attention, also taking into consideration the way this content is presented, among other manifestations present in the moments of analysis.

Starting from this reflection, Fernando Urribarri (2012), in the same direction proposed by Green, thinks the contemporary analyst as a “polyglot analyst”: one who is capable of speaking a number of “languages” – multiple dialects of the unconscious. Beyond the Freudian classical interpretation, this analyst would be able to “hear” different languages communicated by the patient during analysis. According to the author, the polyglot analyst would have a multiple and varied position, which should not be predefined or fixed, and the functions required of him will vary according to the polyphonic singularity of the analytical field. The technical modulations that emerge from this modification of the clinic open the way for a heteromorphy of associativity, making it necessary for analysts to rethink the classical framing, as well as possible extensions of the psychoanalytic method and new types of devices offered to the analysands.

Taking as a starting point the polyglot analyst, able to understand and articulate different psychic languages, the present article seeks to circumscribe and analyze the different types of language found in the clinic, thus understanding what such polyphony consists of. What are the different languages the analyst faces in the clinic – other than verbal? What other discourses would come into play and would need to be embraced and assimilated for a better understanding of clinical cases? We believe it is extremely important to turn our eyes – and ears – to this polyphonic singularity that has become increasingly present in the current analytical field.

## Other/nonverbal communications

Roussillon (2004a) states that every communication of a human being already endowed with words should be considered at different levels and modalities of organization, especially a pre-verbal and a post-verbal level, which live side by side throughout life. In these are implied different levels of symbolization and psychic inscription necessary for language to be formed. The post-verbal level is equivalent to the word as we know and use

it in our daily lives: the verbal discourse that enables some understanding between two human beings. In the clinic, verbal discourse would be the level of communication favored by Freudian classical psychoanalysis – with its technical tools of free association, fluctuating attention, interpretation, among others. On the other hand, the pre-verbal level would host a wider range of discourses, being increasingly studied today, although certain analysts have already pointed out its importance since the beginning of psychoanalysis. Roussillon (2012a) marks the possibility of opening the analytical field to a language prior to the time of verbal language acquisition, in which the analyst must turn his listening to discourses that encompass the whole body and include affection.

Roussillon (2012a, 2012b) points out that Freud himself pointed to the importance of recording events prior to the acquisition of verbal language, specifically emphasizing two particularities present: the earliest experiences are the most frequently repeated; and such an occurrence arises from a failure in the capacity of ego synthesis existing at the moment of the experiences. The impact of early experiences on the subject’s life, lived when he did not understand verbal content or had just initiated in verbal language, is raised by Freud at the end of his life, and was not widely debated by him. It is short texts and notes written during his exile in London that lead to a reflection on the issue in question (Freud (1941[1938]/1996).

In the article entitled *Constructions in Analysis*, Freud (1937/1996) begins to think about the importance of pre-verbal language in analyzing the content of hallucinations present in psychosis. He states that there would be some fragment of experience lived in the childhood of that subject that would return later in adulthood, displaced and disguised within the hallucination phenomenon. Such an experience would be part of a period of life in which the subject still has no mastery over verbal language, and therefore privileges other ways of communication. At this point, there would be an immaturity of self, translated into flaws in the ability of this early ego to connect and integrate (Roussillon, 2012b). For this reason, the experience returns not in the form of a memory that can be narrated, but as an image or experience of a different order.

Deepening the Freudian idea of a weakness of ego synthesis, Roussillon (2011) tells us that it is during the early development of the baby that sensory experiences tend to become unified. However, the achievement of subjective integration of sensoriality results from an extremely complicated process, which will depend on the baby’s ability to communicate something of his subjective experience in order to receive the necessary support from the environment. This communication cannot be done with the help of verbal language yet, so the baby will need to use other tools to make himself understood by the mother/environment.

Roussillon (2011) highlights two main ways in which the baby communicates: (1) using affections – or

affective representatives; (2) through a mime-gesture-postural language – which corresponds to the beginning of the formation of thing-representations. Contents present prior to the record of spoken language are stored and expressed by the body. It is the body that holds elements that can be present in other ways, through its gestures, mimicry, postures, motor skills, acts and affections. It is the body that gives us news of a primeval language (Roussillon, 2012a, 2012b).

Regarding the mime-gesture-postural language, Roussillon (2004b) tells us about the need for an “aesthetic sharing” between the baby and his mother, the basis for the first and fundamental level of body investment: sensoriality. He describes this moment as a kind of reciprocal choreography in which the mime, posture and gestures of both will be adjusted, matching each other. Like a body ballet, communication will be through an unconscious and amodal attunement expressed by shared sensations. The tuning is reciprocal but not symmetrical, requiring adjustment of the mother/environment to the needs of her baby.

Regarding the use of affections to communicate, Roussillon (2004b) discusses an “affective sharing”, a later moment that becomes possible from the bases gained by the acquisition of sensoriality. Affection – feelings and emotions – arises from sensory productions and must become an emotional tune between the baby and his mother. Similarly, the mother also adjusts her affections to the baby’s needs, so that harmony is maintained. Now it is possible to count on two new types of communication, the fruit of these early experiences.

When communication between baby and environment is successful, the psychic apparatus partly reshapes pre- or non-verbal experiences, intertwining them with a narrative that will contain words. This is a long and complicated process that provides us with a range of language skills. At first, words begin to be associated with feelings and inner sensations, gradually replacing body communication. However, it is important to note that the dimensions of affection and mime-gesture-postural language do not disappear, so that verbal and pre-verbal discourses are both languages to be used by us throughout our lives.

Taking into account the theoretical contributions described, we can better understand which polyphonies are increasingly audible in today’s psychoanalytic clinic. Compounding our polyphonic field are verbal discourse (with its full range of associativity) and more structural aspects of it (prosody and structure of constructed sentences), a discourse of affection and even a mime-gesture-postural discourse. All these possibilities will be present in the communication between analyst and patient, expanding and complexifying the analyst’s psychic work, as well as his interventions.

At the same time that the analyst will hear verbal elements from the patient’s associativity, Roussillon (2011) points out that he must also turn his listening to the other languages, which escape this verbal capture. Experiences

that were recorded when the subject did not yet have verbal language return in a “nonverbal” format, typical of the moment of the lived experience – the language of the baby or young child. Thus, it becomes possible to hear the “baby” present in the adult, traces of his early and unintegrated experiences that repeatedly appear *a posteriori*. Affections, acts, and bodily manifestations have the potential to communicate unrelated old experiences (Roussillon, 2004a).

Since both post- and pre-verbal levels coexist side by side, Roussillon (2011) points out that such archaic experiences tend to appear more frequently in the clinic under certain conditions, especially in the cases the author names as narcissistic-identity sufferings. The experiences left out, cleaved from the psyche by an impossibility of integration at the time, tend to return with characteristics of the same time – such as nonverbal language. The author points out that such experiences are of the order of presentation and not of representation, that is, we can think that there is something that shows itself, instead of appearing as images or words associated by the patient and within a more classical logic of representation (Roussillon, 2012a, 2013).

From the situations of narcissistic-identity sufferings, the levels of pre-verbal symbolization become more visible to clinicians’ eyes and ears. Failures in the initial processes of psychic constitution leave visible marks that help us better understand the phenomenon. However, the primary symbolization processes and also their left impressions are present in several clinical situations, since they are constitutive processes of the human psyche and subjectivity. Thus, we take narcissistic-identity sufferings as a starting point to better understand a process that allows broad access to other levels of communicability, without restricting ourselves to this clinical situation only.

## **Primary symbolization processes**

Narcissistic-identity sufferings, as described by Roussillon (1999), concern subjects who suffered failures well before the acquisition of verbal language and the possibility of psychically inscribing them in a symbolized way. For this reason, the forms of appearance of these traumatic events will not usually be through the word, but through other polyphonic possibilities that are also present in the analytical field, as we have been discussing. Based on these clinical situations, but with the understanding that the dimension of primary symbolization is present in different situations, it is essential to think of an expansion of the analyst’s field of listening, to “earlier” than verbal language and symbolization processes.

From the listening of the clinic of narcissistic-identity sufferings comes the concept of “primary symbolization”, Roussillon’s contribution to psychoanalysis that arises as an attempt to theoretically broaden the reach of symbolization theory and representation through his encounter with such patients. The author observed that in

this clinic there would have been severe failures within a primary level of symbolization, which hinders the subject's access to any later level of representation of these lived experiences.

Aiming at the construction of the concept, Roussillon (1999) points out that there are two levels of symbolization work taking place between the three mnemonic records: a first transformation of the indices of perception into thing-representation; and a second, of thing-representations in word-representations. The second level of work was widely theorized by Freud and other authors, and until recently was considered as equivalent to symbolization. The novelty brought by Roussillon was the highlight of this first level of work, already pointed out, though not so schematized, in Freud, which was named "primary symbolization processes".

To give rise to the concept of primary symbolization, Roussillon (2006b) takes up Freud and finds, early in his work, notes on the subject. We find Freud (1915/1996, 1950[1896]/1996) conceiving the passage between the first and second forms of psychic inscription as a quantitative question. What separates them would be only the psychic treatment given to each of them and a difference in the amount of investment received: if it is heavily invested, the mnemonic trace is first re-updated in a hallucinatory way and in the form of perception identity; if invested weakly, it is re-updated as a thing-representation and in the form of thought identity. Thus, the first processes of symbolization are restricted to a purely quantitative conception.

However, Roussillon (2012b) underlines the existence of an alternative model present since the beginning of Freud's work in his dream studies, in which we would find a qualitative transformation across the different inscriptions. Freud (1900/1996) postulates that the passage of traces from subjective experience to dream representation requires a "dream work", which subjects primary psychic matter to qualitative transformations. Of the mechanisms present in the dream work, Roussillon (2006b) highlights figurability to analyze the seed of a work of primary symbolization in Freud.

Figurability is the mechanism highlighted by the author because it is an imperative to present the content of the dream, and the image is also a first form of germinating seed for later work of secondary elaboration in the form of narrativity, since it enables the appearance of elements that make it possible to tell a story from what is dreamed. In other words, there is a modification that allows the contents of the dream (indices of perception) to assume a form (thing-representation) that later may be narrated by the dreamer (word-representation). This transformation is clearly qualitative in that it modifies one content into another, giving rise to the language of the dream. And this model gives us news of a different kind of symbolization work, referred to the primary symbolization processes.

Primary symbolization follows the primary process and links the first psychic inscriptions with the

first symbols – the indices of perception to the thing-representations, the second memory record. This work culminates in the emergence of the thing-representation in the unconscious, formerly present in the form of perceptual traces – a complex, data-rich but immaterial record. To better exemplify the differentiation between what he called primary and secondary symbolization, Roussillon (1999, 2012b) presents the Freudian model of dreamed dream  $\times$  narrated dream. To produce the dreamed dream, there is already a work of symbolization in the sense that something from the register of sensations is transposed into conceptual register, into thing-representation. We call this work the primary symbolization. The narrated dream model would be equivalent to the secondary symbolization, since there is a second transformation so that the dream can be told, allowing its entry into verbal language.

However, the secondary level of symbolization cannot always be reached. Such an achievement will depend on the vicissitudes of the initial relationship that the subject develops with the object. Roussillon (1999) highlights the importance of object responses at the beginning of mother-infant interaction, favoring an intersubjective bias in the beginnings of subjectivity. For the passage from one model to another to be carried out, so that there is a qualitative transformation between the first inscriptions, the object must be present and respond in a "good enough" way – making an analogy with the Winnicottian concept.

About the appropriation of experience, Roussillon (1999) tells us that it does not get meaning immediately, as it requires a work of symbolization for doing so. There needs to be a differentiating gap between the experience itself and the feeling of having gone through such an experience, because what leads to symbolization is the non-identification with that lived experience. The symbolized fact will not be identical with itself because it has a heteromorphy of the systems that traverse and constitute memory. This is a process of perpetual change, enabling memory to present itself so differently.

Primary symbolization, the passage from primary psychic matter to thing-representation, will therefore require a renunciation of the pursuit of identical experience – of hallucinatory order – and the original. To represent, it will be necessary to mourn the original object. According to Roussillon (2012b), "the symbolization that makes the absence of the object tolerable is not the same that is made possible through the absence of the object" (p. 6, our translation).

Starting from this reflection on the beginnings of representation, Roussillon hypothesizes that there is also a mode of symbolization that takes place in the presence of the object, not only in its absence. In addition to the idea that to represent we need to separate ourselves from the object, the author highlights the fact that there must have been, initially, a real and present object so that, later, there may be its separation and representation. The way the object is present founds language modes, especially nonverbal ones. Thus, the dream model must

be complemented by a model of a form of primary symbolization in the presence of the object.

Thinking about the early emotional development of the baby, Winnicott (1953/1975) introduces us to what he called the moment of illusion-disillusionment. According to the author, for this process to be satisfactory, it will first be necessary for the mother to actively adapt to the needs of the baby. This almost complete initial adaptation to the baby gives him the illusion that the environment is omnipotently created and controlled by him. According to this baby's possibility of tolerating frustrations, the mother is gradually adapting.

Early in life, a baby conceives the idea that there is something that could decrease his drive tension. He does not know exactly what it is, what should be created, but he feels that something can be done. At this moment, the mother appears and, if properly adapted to the baby, understands that calling and finds an answer that is felt by the baby as satisfactory, there is an overlap between the mother's act of meeting a baby's need and what he could conceive as a need. In this sense, illusion inhabits an intermediate area between internal and external, between what is objectively perceived and what is subjectively conceived – the transitional area.

The field of illusion exceeds the hallucination/perception opposition from the coincidence between the processes of baby rearing in his magical omnipotence and control and the maternal devotion to supply any need that she believes to be present in the baby. The role played by illusion is central to the child's subsequent emotional development, as this gentle adaptation to reality is what will allow him to maintain a healthier relationship with the barriers between internal and external, objective and subjective, fantasy and reality. The presence of the object lies in the concept of Winnicottian illusion, since it draws our attention to the importance of coincidence between baby's processes and environmental response (Roussillon, 2012b).

In this direction, we may think that this process only occurs if there is a tune between mother and baby at this initial moment. It is only according to the mother's response that the illusion created by the baby can become perception from a primitive sensation that acquires the status of message to the other. Returning to this point, the somatic and affective dimension is presented here as having a huge communicative and narrative potential (Roussillon, 1999). However, such potential will only be achieved if there is another who can receive this communication as a message.

In relation to such a potential message, it is important to note that there is no prior, unchanging meaning to be conveyed, but that it will be constructed partly by the sender and partly by how the recipient will receive and respond to that message. If the message is not received or acknowledged in its symbolic value, its potential degenerates, becoming desymbolized. Without the help of the other, this content becomes toxic to the baby and not susceptible to symbolizing work, remaining

encased in some corner of the psyche in a timeless manner (Roussillon, 2011).

## **The symbolizing function of the object**

In order for the work of primary symbolization to be done and become part of the subject's own psychic tools, it will be essential that the object assist him in this beginning and, along the process, shift from work supported by the other to work done by the subject himself. It is the characteristics of the primary relation that the subject constitutes with the object that will serve as the basis for his relation to his later symbolizing activity itself (Roussillon, 1999).

The initial help will be marked by the choice of objects that will welcome the primary psychic matter "drained" by the baby. The matter will be transferred to the object, which will receive it according to its possibilities. With this, the object prints its specific mark and its particular model from the singular response given to the transfer of this matter to itself. The quality of the object response will be of paramount importance for the process to develop, so that it can be hampered at one time or another after its production if the response is not satisfactory.

The first object to receive these contents will be the mother – here understood not as a biological mother, but as one who performs the function of caring. Following the Winnicottian logic of the created/found object, the mother's real and concrete characteristics will need to be hallucinatorily used by the child. It is necessary that there is a communion between the element that is effectively found in the reality of the maternal figure and the one that is projected on her, hallucinated and transferred to her figure by the child (Winnicott, 1953/1975).

It is at this moment of convergence between the created object and the found object that psychic primary matter finds its direction. Such perceptual convergence opens the way for us to think about the central difficulty of primary symbolization work: the object that helps to symbolize is also an object to be symbolized (Roussillon, 1999). The helping object itself also lacks symbolization. These are the two faces of the symbolizing function of the object. This is the first paradox found in the process that must be respected before it can develop. It is necessary to support the differences introduced by the paradox, as well as their similarities.

There will be a dual need to find the otherness of the object, while at the same time it will help symbolize that otherness. For this operation to be possible, Roussillon (1999) points out that the object must accept to let itself be used, while proposing a difference between the external object and the representation that will be made internally. Based on the Winnicottian concept of "object use" (Winnicott, 1969/1975), Roussillon states that the mother must consent to let herself be transformed and changed in order to become malleable and childlike. In place of the thing itself, there appears the thing "to play with," the thing to be used as an

object to symbolize. However, it must be pointed out that the gap between the object itself and a possible representation of it is crucial here, since it introduces non-identity, which opens to the symbolizing space.

Given the picture presented, the mother must consent and bear to be used in this way. She needs to accept letting her needs and desires pending in order to fit her baby's needs, giving shape to this psychic primary matter – helping to turn them into symbolization. This is the essential condition for primary symbolization to be satisfactorily constituted. In the use of the object there is an acceptance of attenuating one's otherness to adapt to the needs of the other. There is an attempt at momentary erasure of oneself so that one can be used as a malleable object upon which the baby will deposit primary psychic matter still without form. In this sense, the presence and response of the object become essential for the establishment of the primary symbolization process in the other (Roussillon, 1999).

The tolerance of the object to the reception of the hallucination of the baby's psychic primary matter is related to a sufficiently satisfactory malleability in the relationship with the object, a living form of Marion Milner's (1952/1991) concept of "malleable environment". Through this concept, Roussillon (2006a) finds a support to think about what happens in these first object relations. In the author's words, "giving shape, modeling the air or a mass, articulating, making visible an invisible but material fluid, such seemed to be the common imperative underlying these different relationships" (p. 158).

The malleable environment was a concept that emerged from Milner's clinic with children. It allows the subject to begin to discriminate between external and internal realities based on some objective reality that he eventually encounters with the object. The environment is used by the other, momentarily omnipotent. In this sense, intersubjectivity gains ground by stating that it will be necessary to actually find the object so that something of externality is recognizable. The movement will no longer be from the inside out (from baby to mother) or from the outside in (imposed by reality), but from the meeting between them and what will come next.

For the object to be understood as a malleable environment, it must have some characteristics, among which Roussillon (2006a) highlights five. The first and most fundamental is indestructibility. The object must be usable – change its shape – and survive. Malleability is understood here as an eternal transformation, a movement that will aid in representation.

Next, we have as property an extreme sensitivity of the environment. Although it cannot be destroyed, it will only require small quantitative variations to change.

As a third characteristic of the malleable environment we find the indefinite transformation, that is, the capacity to acquire every and any form. If, at the same time, it must be indestructible and sensitive, Roussillon (2006a) states that "it must be indefinitely

transformable but remain itself" (p. 164). Its nature does not change, only its form.

This feature can only occur if added to the next one: the environment must be unconditionally available. At all times, the subject needs to be able to reach it and find it accessible.

The fifth and last property of the malleable environment is its living character. Although it may be an inanimate substance, the subject must be able to find life in it. This feature is extremely important since it is not enough for the object to survive possible attacks and transformations. Given the destructiveness found, it will be necessary that the object does not retract – it must be psychically present; that the object does not retaliate or enter into a power struggle with the subject; and that the object is alive and creative (Roussillon, 1999).

By obeying these properties, the mother becomes a good "modeling material", from which the baby can drain its hallucinations from primary psychic matter and get help organizing them. However, in order for the object to function as a malleable environment, it must not only survive, but also have some pleasure in using its form and interiority. The mother will need to understand and accept the paradox of using the object so that it can help to symbolize. The symbolizing function of the object joins the functions of paraexcitation and restraint as requirements to be fulfilled by the maternal object (Roussillon, 1999).

However, it is undeniable that the object is also another, differentiated. It is constituted by its own characteristics, containing its specificity, its desires and elements that are not malleable. The object also has its "hard", unchanging parts, those that cannot be immediately usable. As malleable as the object may be, there is also something that is proper to it and that prevents it from adapting to this baby, who meets resistance. Just as the object welcomes the transfer of psychic primary matter, it also refracts it.

These unadapted elements will be experienced by the baby as enigmatic and ungraspable. Since the object also has characteristics that are not malleable, it is not possible for the baby to transfer the psychic primary matter wholly and completely to the object, as we have described, since there is a hardness of its own that prevents its modification. Thus, there is always a remainder: that which could not take shape in the relationship with the object, left over from the first time of the symbolization process, gives rise to a first bifurcation of the process.

### **The *objeu* and the beginnings of symbolization**

From the moment the subject does not find the solution to all his needs in the maternal object, he will look for other objects in order to perceptually represent what threatens to escape. This first object found outside is named by Roussillon as *objeu*. The word is an anagram composed of the sum of two French words: *objet* (object) and *jeu* (game, play). The encounter with this first object

would be a very primitive form of play, which leads to new processes of primary symbolization. These first meetings will later enable the work of psychic dematerialization that leads to the reflexivity contained in the thinking and in the representation activity itself.

The *objeu* resembles the Winnicottian concept of transitional object in that it represents at the same time that which is external and internal. It is a creation of the subject, but it has a materiality – a paradox that, as in Winnicott, should not be resolved. It is both a subjective and an objective object. Thanks to hallucination, it acquires a psychic value; thanks to perception and motor skills, it can be handled and explored in external reality (Roussillon, 2011).

The *objeu* holds both what began to take shape in the relationship with the maternal object – that the environment found was malleable – and what could not begin to be represented in that relationship. There is an overdetermination of what occurred. Standing side by side are that which could be produced with the aid of the maternal object and that which could not. If the initial response of the maternal object was satisfactory, these objects can become animated thanks to the transference of the living characteristics of this first response.

Like the living character of the malleable environment, the object can become animated from the hallucinatory externalization of the inner trace and the first reunion of this trace with another subject, also alive, and who responds creatively. For the child to later make use of play, something must have been satisfactorily done in the first moment of the primary symbolization process. The maternal object must have been used as a malleable environment so that the characteristic of transferring something alive to inanimate objects could have been successfully accomplished (Minerbo, 2013).

However, says Roussillon (1999), this transfer of living characteristics only takes place if the object tolerates and authorizes, or rather favors, this displacement. For this, it will be necessary for the object to recognize the limit of its use by the subject and the need to find somewhere else, other than in the primary mother-baby relationship, that which the object cannot give him. Here there will be the recognition of a first expression of the incest ban, which promulgates the impossibility of the maternal object to fulfill all the needs of the subject, but at the same time opens the possibility of satisfying out of this fusional relationship what the object cannot give him. The displacement of the maternal object to the *objeu* is then the first form of metaphorization.

Unlike the relation with the maternal object, in the *objeu* it is possible to explore the enigma and the “hardness” of the object, its non-malleable aspects, since the hallucinatory update together with the encounter of an external object makes the *objeu* become an object to the psyche. It can be exploited, attacked, thrown, bitten, used mercilessly for the subject’s creativity and destructiveness. Thanks to motricity, the *objeu* becomes

manipulable and transformable, psychically sheltered. And in the unfolding of this merciless use, subjectively appropriated, as long as it survives the violent aspects of primary love and destructiveness.

From the experience and discovery of the properties of play, the *objeu* makes it possible to discover the properties of symbolization, helping the establishment of primary symbolization processes. Playing self-symbolizes the symbolizing activity that it authorizes (Roussillon, 1999). It allows one to discover its characteristics, its conditions of possibility, its preconditions. Play itself is one of the objects of play. It is not pure self-eroticism but a self-erotic activity that opens up to symbolization. At the same time it recognizes otherness and tries to soften it to the extent that it is reduced by its own representation.

However, there is also a limit to playing, since activity depends on the presence and materiality that constitutes the *objeu*. By relying on this substance and pointing to the limit of its activity, play opens to a new bifurcation of the process of primary symbolization: the work of psychic dematerialization that is necessary to reach the true state of representation of things – end of the process of primary symbolization.

Minerbo (2013) situates us in the field of primary symbolization by saying that, until now, the child has not formed thing-representations, only things that represent. So far there are external objects and a dependence on them that cannot be lost, since the primary symbolization is not yet complete. The next step in the process is to be able to perform a self-representation, which would therefore involve giving up absolute dependence on objects. The events that occurred in the first two moments (maternal object and *objeu*) enable the child to begin symbolizing the very activity of symbolizing.

The fundamental paradox of the process of primary symbolization is that while the subject seeks to get rid of the object narcissistically, there is a need for it to constitute oneself as a subject. And then we enter the field of intersubjectivity, since no human being can be psychologically self-engendered – just as he is not bodily so. Our psychic organization depends not only on the events that have occurred and the way we signify them, but also on the dialectic that is established between such events and the responses that come from the other. The possibilities of the maternal object to listen to the polysemy produced by the baby, to understand communication that escapes the verbal field, to tune into the needs of the other, to be used as malleable material, will be extremely important for a satisfactory achievement of this process, as well as between analyst and analysand (Roussillon, 1999).

In this sense, we may think that the answer provided by the analyst will be of great importance throughout this journey. It enables a work of reflection, of giving back to the other what is being received – as long as it is not a mere empty echo of what the other presents. It is not enough to reflect impartially, like a

mirror that cannot be touched by what comes from the other. For this form of mirrored response to be affective as well, assisting in the changes towards subjective appropriation, it will be necessary to find a fine-tuning that generates an affective sharing between both. This movement will be a condition of possibility for the symbolization work to happen.

However, within this empathic relationship, the otherness of the object will be as important as its similarity. The work required to achieve the metaphorizing function, implicit in all symbolization, supposes playing on both sides, that of the difference and of the similarity (Roussillon, 2006b). Thus, the analyst's work is intricate, since he needs to be part of this game of diverting and reflecting the subject's contents, while the subject acquires the reflexive capacity, based on the work

of symbolization. Only when intersubjective experience becomes minimally satisfying can the subject develop the internal capacity to move toward new possibilities of symbolization.

Thus, the intersubjective field presents obstacles as well, since the object always contains something strange and enigmatic for the subject, which cannot be "modeled". This discussion opens the way for us to think about the central paradox of primary symbolization work: the object that helps to symbolize is also an object to be symbolized (Roussillon, 1999). There will be a dual need to find the otherness of the object, while at the same time it will help symbolize that same otherness. In this sense, the analyst's work will be to compose this intersubjective pair, helping to resume the symbolization processes.

### **Polifonias em análise: os processos de simbolização primária**

**Resumo:** Neste artigo, propõe-se discutir diferentes formas de comunicação existentes na clínica psicanalítica, para além da linguagem verbal, tendo como base os processos de simbolização primária e a importância de uma ampliação na escuta do analista. Tomando como base os escritos de René Roussillon, adentramos no campo da intersubjetividade para refletirmos acerca de uma escuta diferenciada que passa a ser requerida pelo analista na direção de possibilitar o acolhimento de diferentes formas de comunicação. Nestes casos, algo diferente da palavra se torna audível, trazendo à tona falhas referentes ao trabalho de representação, de forma que processos de simbolização mais arcaicos surgem dotados de outras vozes, como tentativa de ampliar teoricamente os alcances da simbolização e da representação.

**Palavras-chave:** clínica psicanalítica, comunicação não-verbal, René Roussillon.

### **Polyphonies en analyse: les processus de symbolisation primaire**

**Résumé:** Dans cet article, nous proposons à discuter des différentes formes de communication existant dans la clinique psychanalytique, en plus du langage verbal, basées sur les processus de la symbolisation primaire et sur l'importance d'une amplification dans l'écoute de l'analyste. Basées sur les écrits de René Roussillon, nous entrons dans le champ de l'intersubjectivité pour réfléchir à une écoute différenciée requise par l'analyste, qui va permettre la réception de ces différentes formes de communication. Dans ces cas, une communication au delà du verbal devient audible, mettant en évidence des défauts concernant le travail de représentation, de sorte que des processus de symbolisation plus archaïques apparaissent dotés d'autres voix, comme tentative d'élargir théoriquement la portée de la symbolisation et de la représentation.

**Mots-clés:** clinique psychanalytique, communication non verbale, René Roussillon.

### **Polifonías en análisis: los procesos de simbolización primaria**

**Resumen:** En el presente artículo, nos proponemos discutir diferentes formas de comunicación existentes en la clínica psicoanalítica, además del lenguaje verbal, teniendo como base los procesos de simbolización primaria y la importancia de una ampliación en la escucha del analista. Tomando como base los escritos de René Roussillon, adentramos en el campo de la intersubjetividad para pensar acerca de una escucha diferenciada que pasa a ser requerida por el analista en el sentido de posibilitar la acogida de estas diferentes formas de comunicación. En estos casos, algo diferente de la palabra se vuelve audible, trayendo a la luz fallas referentes al trabajo de representación, de forma que procesos de simbolización más arcaicos surgen dotados de otras voces como intento de ampliar teóricamente los alcances de la simbolización y de la representación.

**Palabras clave:** clínica psicoanalítica, comunicación no verbal, René Roussillon.



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