

FEP CONFERENCE CANNES 2023

Panel of IPA subcommittee Migrants and Refugees

Virginia De Micco (Italy): “Illusions, and disillusion, in psychoanalytical work with migrants”

The psychic area of illusion is deeply involved in migratory experience: often the migratory project is based on the ‘illusion’ of a promise land , moreover as Leon and Rebeca Grinberg underline migration is assimilated to an experience of re-birth, so migrants have to cross again the fundamental area of vital illusion and after to deal with a necessary disillusion and acceptance of reality.

That’s why the famous Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad speaks of « the illusions of the emigrant and the disillusion of the immigrant ». In this painful process of acceptance of reality and working through of disillusion a fundamental role is played from the host country -its insitutions and reception centres for examples- and its capacity to help a passage from illusion to reality not too violent and disruptive, just like a good-enough motherly function does.

Another crucial area in the play of illusions and disillusion in migratory experience concerns the unconscious cross projections between migrants and natives, that works both in socio-anthropological field and in psychological field.

In this work through clinical examples we will examine the role of psychoanalytical listening in the complexity of crosscultural relations, helping the working through of reciprocal projections, illusions and disillusion, in order to avoid a real re-traumatization of migrants and refugees from one part and violent forms of rejection in the host country from the other part

Mayssa El Hussein (France): “The therapist’s own cultural trauma: counter-transferential ambushes in working with refugees”

The encounter in the clinic with refugees mobilizes various registers of the analyst's psychic experience: the individual register and the collective register in their conscious and unconscious dimensions.

In this presentation I focus on the interrelation between these registers in what it produces as an illusory referential of clinical reading and interpretation.

Based on qualitative research conducted with 45 therapists working in trauma clinic, I will present the results of the analysis of data from therapists working with refugees and internally displaced persons in various geo-political contexts. A psychic process emerges from the analysis of the different interviews that i refer to as a « cultural folding »: in the face of the insidious encounter between cultural trauma, collective trauma and trauma of exile, the violence of trauma residus are assigned as an intrinsic component to the other’s culture.

This process appears to be a refuge for archaic collective trauma emergences in the counter-transference in an attempt to construct meaning to the traumatic experience and to protect the analyst’s identity.

Chair: Gertraud Schlesinger-Kipp, Germany