

TRAUMA, CLEAVAGE AND INTELLECTUAL PROGRESSION: A STUDY OF THE FERENCZI'S WISE BABY (*).

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ABSTRACT.

This study analyzed the figure of the ‘wise baby’ in the work of Sándor Ferenczi with the purpose of investigating the links established between trauma and intelligence. We analyzed the Ferenczian writings of the 1930s, since they conjugate the theory and practice of Ferenczi with traumatized patients. First, the researchers discuss the traumatic context of precocious maturity, inspecting the notions of trauma and denial. Then, the authors analyzed the concept of cleavage, a defense by which the individual divides himself/herself in a being that knows everything but feels nothing. Finally, the researchers explore the figure of the ‘wise baby’, discussing the notions of traumatic progression and pathological prematurity. The analytical process in clinical practice with ‘wise babies’ must ensure the necessary conditions for a reversal of direction in the maturation processes through the ways of regression and confident submission to analytical care. The researchers believe that this theoretical path will refine the sensitivity required to listen to the almost inaudible suffering of ‘wise babies’ in clinical practice with children.

Keywords: Trauma; cleavage; wise baby.

RESUMO.

O presente trabalho propõe um estudo sobre a figura do bebê sábio na obra de Sándor Ferenczi, com o objetivo de investigar os laços que se estabelecem entre trauma e inteligência. Examinam-se os escritos ferenczianos dos anos 1930, posto que conjugam o pensamento clínico de Ferenczi sobre o trauma. Discute-se, inicialmente, a conjuntura traumática da maturação precoce, articulando as noções de trauma e desmentido. Em seguida, analisa-se o conceito de clivagem, defesa por meio da qual o indivíduo se fragmenta, dividindo-se em um ser que tudo sabe e nada sente. Por fim, debruça-se sobre a figura do bebê sábio, discutindo as noções de progressão traumática e prematuração patológica. Considera-se que o processo analítico na clínica com os ‘bebês sábios’ deve assegurar as condições necessárias para uma inversão de sentido nos processos de maturação pelas vias da regressão e da entrega confiante aos cuidados analíticos. Acredita-se que tal percurso teórico permitirá um refinamento da sensibilidade necessária para escutar o sofrimento, quase inaudível,

dos ‘bebês sábios’ na prática clínica com crianças. **Palavras-chave:** Trauma; clivagem; bebê sábio.

RESUMEN.

El presente artículo propone un estudio sobre la figura del ‘bebé sabio’ en la obra de Sándor Ferenczi, con el objetivo de investigar los lazos que se establecen entre trauma e inteligencia. Se examina, especialmente, los escritos ferenczianos de los años 1930, una vez que conjugan la teoría y la clínica de Ferenczi con pacientes traumatizados. Se discute, inicialmente, la coyuntura traumática de la maduración precoz, articulando las nociones de trauma y desmentida. En seguida, se analiza el concepto de clivaje, defensa a través de la cual el individuo se divide en un ser que todo sabe y nada siente. Por fin, se aborda la figura del ‘bebé sabio’, discutiendo las nociones de progresión traumática y prematuración patológica. Se considera que el proceso analítico en la clínica con los ‘bebés sabios’ debe asegurar las condiciones necesarias para una inversión de sentido en los procesos de maduración a través de la regresión y de la entrega confiada a los cuidados analíticos. Se cree que tal recorrido teórico refinará la sensibilidad necesaria para escuchar el sufrimiento, casi inaudible, de los ‘bebés sabios’ en la práctica clínica con niños.

Palabras clave: Trauma; clivaje; bebé sabio.

INTRODUCTION

Autotomy

In danger, the holothurian cuts itself in two.
It abandons one self to a hungry world
and with the other self it flees.
It violently divides into doom and salvation,
retribution and reward, what has been and what will be.
An abyss appears in the middle of its body
between what instantly become two foreign shores.
Life on one shore, death on the other.
Here hope and there despair.
If there are scales, the pans don't move.
If there is justice, this is it.
To die just as required, without excess.
To grow back just what's needed from what's left.
We, too, can divide ourselves, it's true.
But only into flesh and a broken whisper.
Into flesh and poetry.
The throat on one side, laughter on the other,
quiet, quickly dying out.
Here the heavy heart, there *non omnis moriar*,
just three little words, like a flight's three feathers.
The abyss doesn't divide us.
The abyss surrounds us
Wisława Szymborska (2016, p. 142).

Often, in the daily clinical practice, we encounter the links that are established between trauma and intelligence. We refer here to children who seem to have matured early from the exploitation of intellectual potential as a result of traumatic events experienced early in life. These are, therefore, very wise and quick children, affectionate to thought, but uncomfortable with the affections. In most cases they are lovely and gentle, and very well-behaved, both in the way they behave and contain themselves. Despite the smartness, however, there is insecurity and fear in the face of the least adversity, conflict or failure.

In general, such children rarely complain of suffering, so they are brought to the analysis for hypersensitivity and/or significant burnout that develops with a phobic, irritable or depressive aspect and sometimes with feelings of boredom, emptiness and some compulsions. Often, they face difficulties in the interaction with other children, becoming lonely and without belonging. From the clinical point of view, therefore, we observe children with difficulties to indulge in play, preoccupied with always appearing pleasant and satisfied, undertaking sophisticated speeches. We have the impression that the apparent vitality of the child reveals an impossibility to inhabit the rest and time of childhood. We often find that this impossibility goes back to a reversal of the care relationship in the family environment, which is why children need to 'defend themselves', performing a parental attitude towards themselves and the adults important to their existence.

Certainly, it is not a question here of proposing a cause-and-effect relationship between trauma and intelligence, nor of mitigating the psychic pain involved, but rather of thinking how the advancement of maturity processes is associated with a strategy of survival in the face of traumatic situations. This issue encourages the investigation of the figure of the wise baby in the work of Sándor Ferenczi; this figure expresses the child who becomes extremely intelligent as a rescue measure in the face of trauma. Indeed, with Ferenczi (1992a, p. 254) it is possible to think that "[...] the intellect is born only from suffering [...]", constituting an attempt to compensate for a complete psychic commotion in the face of trauma.

To this end, we analyzed the Ferenczian writings of the 1930s, especially, *Analysis of children with adults* (Ferenczi, 1992b), *Confusion of languages between adults and child* (Ferenczi, 1992c) and some notes compiled in *Notes and Fragments* (Ferenczi, 1992a) and in the *Clinical Diary* (Ferenczi, 1990), since they combine Ferenczi's theory and clinic with traumatized patients. Such investigation will allow us to refine the sensitivity required to listen to the almost inaudible suffering of 'wise babies' in clinical practice with children.

TRAUMA AND DENIAL

Trauma occupies a central place in Ferenczi's work. Considered an expert on 'difficult patients', the Hungarian psychoanalyst worked largely with more primary and more severe sufferings than the classical sufferings of neurosis. From the analysis of cases with these characteristics, he realized the importance of relational aspects, the complexity of psychic functioning in the face of trauma and the defense mechanisms involved in trauma survival. In his *Clinical Diary* (1990), we can closely follow some difficulties, attempts and potentialities encountered in his process of theoretical investigation and treatment of psychological distress.

Indeed, the famous article *Confusion of languages between adults and child*, published in 1933, is the most significant moment in the elaboration of the trauma theory that runs through the Ferenczian work. This text addresses the traumatic relationship between adults and children, taking into account the language difference between them. While the child is immersed in the 'language of tenderness', experiencing a playful and make-believe world; the adult is in the 'language of passion', the domain of adult sexuality, marked by sexual interdictions, repression, and guilt. In this sense, "[...] tenderness and passion consist of two different ways of relating to one another, they are like two distinct languages" (Dal Molin, 2017, p. 76), which denotes a significant differential of intensities and expressions that cannot be abolished.

From these two records, Ferenczi (1992c) used an emblematic scene of seduction of a child by an adult, highlighting the confusion of languages involved there. This is about the construction of a myth that involves three characters and two moments (Pinheiro, 1995). At first, a child and an adult play. It is worth noting that "[...] the game may take on an erotic form, but it remains, however, always at the level of tenderness" (Ferenczi, 1992c, p. 101-102). Some adults, however, confuse the child's play with the desires of a sexually mature person, that is, they interpret the language of tenderness as genital seduction. In these terms, they end up responding to the child's play and the addressing terms of the child with sexual violence. The adult of the language of passion is therefore the one who loses the dimension of the difference between the generations.

It is important to clarify that confusion results from the fusion of the two languages, thus inherent in the relationship of the adult with the child. In fact, there is no way for the adult to relate to the child through language other than his/her own. In this sense, it is mainly a matter of recognizing the difference at stake in this relationship, because there is no way to escape it, nor to deny it. Certainly, such a difference produces a number of misunderstandings and traumas, but they can acquire a structuring sense as they contribute to the child's development and psychic organization (Pinheiro, 1995). Learning hygiene standards, for example, can be traumatic in that it forces the child to subject to an external law, whose motive eludes him/her, but is absolutely necessary and structuring for his/her psyche.

By this way of understanding, the disorganizing trauma, in turn, is instituted for the child when the adult violently clashes with his/her language of tenderness, making unfeasible the process of psychic metabolization and reorganization after the shock. In fact, sexual seduction amounts to forced intrusion. In this case, the child feels threatened by what comes surprisingly from the adult. Physical and psychic violation is therefore determined by the abusive exercise of power and authority of an adult who neglects the child's desire and mode of functioning, and trauma is the result of this violation. In this context, the needs of adults prevail over those of the child in the psychic dynamics of the family (Cabr e, 2017)

Following the scene narrated by Ferenczi (1992c), the adult, agent of sexual violence, feels guilty and denies what happened, stating to the child that nothing happened. Taken by the reality of the experience, the child seeks another adult in the family or surroundings to explain what happened. The latter, for not supporting

what the child tells him/her, denies the report, disregarding his/her experience. According to Ferenczi (1992b, p. 79), “[...] the worst is really the denial, the statement that nothing happened, that there was no suffering”. Indeed, what is denied is the child’s own suffering. Thus, it is the conjunction between violence and denial that configures the traumatic scenario in *Confusion of language*. For Cabré (2017), denial is the most violent aspect of trauma, being a new attack on the possibility of understanding the meaning of the event.

It is important to underline that the dynamics of denial can take place in many situations when a child’s thoughts and affections are neglected and disqualified, throwing him/her into an irreconcilable dilemma: trusting the truth of the adult or the truth of his/her senses. Parental failure, for example, to look at wounds on a child’s body or *bullying* can imply a dynamic of denial, as what the child expresses, his/her state of being or his/her body, is not received as communication. That is, when parents treat with indifference, careless or unimportant an event that greatly affected the child. Thus, not only is the child’s suffering denied, but his/her own existence (Reis & Mendonça, 2018). In other words, “[...] denial not only does not confirm what has happened, it also casts doubt on the very existence of the one who experienced it” (Knobloch, 1998, p. 51).

We want to draw attention to the fact that until then the child had the security of family ties, but after the denial, the child is without protection. That is, he/she loses the condition of family support and protection, ultimately, trust in the bond. There remains absolute solitude. What strikes, therefore, is not the violence itself but, above all, the lack of support. In this sense, “[...] it is an experience with the object in which the most important aspect is not so much what happened, but what did not happen” (Cabré, 2017, p. 29, our translation)⁴. Thus, the trauma reflects the absence of an adequate response of an adult in a situation in which the child feels vulnerable, defenseless, on the verge of non-existence, putting in check all the trust he/she places in the adult.

Considering that adults are for the child the support of the trust and his/her relations with the world and with him/herself (Pinheiro, 1995), the depletion of internal resources and external help leads the child to a state of ‘psychic commotion’ (Ferenczi, 1992a), sinking the psyche into deep agonies. The traumatic experience thus engenders the “[...] suspension of all kinds of psychic activity, added to the establishment of a state of passivity devoid of any resistance” (Ferenczi, 1992a, p. 113). In this context, the child “[...] surrenders his/her soul [...]”, as Ferenczi (1990, p. 73) writes, absenting him/herself and the world around him/her. In this way, he/she easily and without resistance accepts the form given to him/her, “[...] like a flour bag” (Ferenczi, 1992a, p. 109), losing his/her own form. According to Gondar (2017a), it is also possible to think that a traumatized child will be more easily subjected to the other’s desire, to the extent that his/her desire does not have or did not have any importance.

Faced with the “[...] overwhelming authority of adults” (Ferenczi, 1992c, p. 102), the child feels defenseless and loses his/her voice. With the references frayed and taken by an intense fear, the child submits to the will of the one who violated him/her, incorporating his/her guilt. Through the mechanism of ‘identification with the aggressor’ (Ferenczi, 1992c), the child begins to guess and obey his/her wishes. By hosting the aggressor within him/herself, the child converts his/her childish spontaneity into sentinel and docility, becoming a mechanically functioning being. Such adaptation thus implies “[...] a dimension of partial death, loss and renunciation of a portion of individuality” (Pinheiro & Viana, 2018, p. 56). By identification, then, the adult disappears as an outer reality, becoming intrapsychic. The way this happens in the psyche can be understood from the investigation of the concept of cleavage, as we will see below.

THE ACTION OF CLEAVAGE

The concept of cleavage is closely related to the theory of trauma in Ferenczi’s work. It is a radical strategy of psychic survival when the defenses are depleted and the hope of help is gone. In this context, a ‘narcissistic self-cleavage’ operates, in Ferenczi’s (1992c) terms, that is, a psychic fragmentation through which the unbearable unification of suffering is eliminated, dispersing the traumatic effects. Fragmentation implies a process of self-destruction for the sake of psychic survival. In this sense, Roussillon (1999) postulates that cleavage operates by cutting or removing subjectivity. In his words: “[...] the subject withdraws from the primary traumatic experience; he withdraws and ‘cuts off’ from his/her subjectivity. He assures, this is the

paradox, his psychic ‘survival’ being cut from his/her subjective psychic life” (p. 20, author’s emphasis, our translation)⁵. According to Knobloch (2016), becoming multiple represents an outlet to neutralize the agonizing state of trauma, as the support surface of the unbearable is widened by fragmentation.

The image of Ferenczi cleavage becomes clearer through the concept of autotomy, borrowed from biology (Ferenczi, 2011a). It is a concept developed from a reaction mode observed in some elementary living beings, such as the gecko. Such a way consists in detaching from pieces of the body, the seat of a painful excitement and the source of extreme suffering, to allow the rest of the body to be safeguarded. Similarly, the individual also leaves or destroys parts of him/herself by cleaving him/herself, thus seeking to separate the pain from the traumatic experience and move on. Therefore, there is a kind of sacrifice of a piece of itself for the survival of the whole. In the words of Ferenczi (1990, p. 240): “[...] the being who remains alone must only help him/herself and, for this purpose, cleave to the one who helps and the one who is helped”.

The individual then divides him/herself “[...] into a sensitive, brutally destroyed part, and into a part which, in a way, knows everything but feels nothing” (Ferenczi, 1992c, p. 77). The part that knows everything watches the destruction from the outside, in the distance, like watching a movie. It should be stressed that there is little relationship between the cleaved parts, and the affect is restricted to a certain element, not transferring to the others (Dal Molin, 2016). In other words, fragmented zones coexist in the psyche without, however, establishing contact or association with each other, nor do they conflict. In fact, “[...] the assignment of the interrelation of pain fragments allows each of the fragments greater adaptability” (Ferenczi, 1992a, p. 248). Thus, the possible bridges between subjectivity and objectivity of the world are broken. Such lack of connections and cohesion in the psyche often translates into a difficulty in feeling present, alive and real, as well as bringing feelings of strangeness, discouragement and emptiness.

In fact, through the “[...] rupture between feeling and intelligence” (Ferenczi, 1990, p. 250), suffering and the fear of death (physical and psychic) are interrupted. Under these conditions, the subject no longer feels the traumatic state, put on the sidelines, but also does not feel anything, anesthetizing him/herself. With regard to affective life, according to Ferenczian thinking, there is a refuge in regression, so that the individual feels no emotion to the end; deep down, it is never to him/her that things happen (Ferenczi, 1990). It should be pointed out that this is not an insensitivity, but an affective disconnection from the radical discontinuity produced by the action of cleavage (Verztman, 2002). That is, the apparent desensitization reveals, deep down, a hypersensitization. Intelligence, however, takes a progressive path, being overinvested, as we will see later.

According to Ferenczi (1992c), the more primary the traumatic shocks, the greater the number and variety of cleaved fragments, resulting in a radical psychic state of psychic atomization and disorientation. Nevertheless, it is fragmentation, that is, the process of becoming multiple that allows us to support traumatic reality. In fact, from the fragments comes a new self. This ‘neoformation’, in Ferenczi’s (1990) terms, is possible only from the previous total or partial destruction of the preceding self. It should be emphasized that in view of the impossibility of producing changes in the traumatic environment in an alloplastic way, there is often no alternative for the individual but to transform him/herself, in an autoplasic way, engendering a new subjectification more adapted to external circumstances (Ferenczi, 1990).

THE FIGURE OF THE WISE BABY

The figure of the wise baby appears for the first time in Ferenczi’s (2011b) work in a short article entitled ‘O sonho do bebê sábio’ in 1923. Starting from this typical dream, he sets in motion the childish desire to supplant the ‘great’ in wisdom, a desire that, in turn, reverses the situation in which the child is in relation to the adult. The analysis of this dream opens some ways of interpretation, such as the child who seeks through knowledge to elaborate his/her theories about sexuality. However, this figure becomes more relevant after the advances of trauma theory and clinical practice in the 1930s. In this context, the wise baby illustrates the psychic configuration of a traumatized child who becomes extremely adult to cope with his/her psychic suffering in the absence of adult care. In the words of Ferenczi (1992c, p. 104)

A child who has been sexually assaulted can suddenly, under the pressure of a traumatic urgency, manifest all the emotions of a mature adult, the potential faculties for marriage, parenthood, motherhood, virtually preformed faculties.

It is thus a surprising and sudden outbreak of new faculties that arise as a result of trauma. According to Ferenczi (1992a, p. 248), an ‘internal force’ from energies hitherto at rest or used for object relations “[...] assesses with mathematical precision both the severity of the trauma and the available defense capability [...]”, calculating the only psychic and physical behavior appropriate to the given situation. In this regard, Ferenczi (1990) mentions the existence of ‘Orphic powers’ mobilized for the preservation of life ‘whatever it takes’. *Orpha* (feminine of Orpheus) can be understood as a kind of omnipotent intelligence, healing agent and salvation principle (Soreanu, 2018), summoned when death is near, yet acting tirelessly in favor of life. In this context, “*Orpha* brings with it the emergence of hyper-faculties and overperformance” (Soreanu, 2018, p. 23), capable of adapting to the previously unbearable situation.

Instead of the classical regression of psychoanalysis, Ferenczi (1992c) proposes, therefore, an escape from psychic suffering in the progressive sense, which can be described in terms of a ‘traumatic progression’ or ‘pathological prematurity’. In these circumstances, then, there is a “[...] sudden development of intelligence, even clairvoyance, in short, a flight forward” (Ferenczi, 1990, p. 251). The image evoked by Ferenczi (1992c, p. 104) poetically illustrates such a mechanism: “One thinks of the fruits that become ripe and tasty too quickly when a bird’s beak hurts them, and the hasty maturity of a wormed fruit”. It should be emphasized that the break between intelligence and feeling, as the Ferenczi’s notion of cleavage teaches us, is just what allows the coexistence of an embryonic emotional state, at the same time an intellectual wisdom as that of an understanding, mathematical, entirely objective philosopher. Such wisdom, then, is sustained in the absence of connection between the objective world and subjectivity, between thoughts and affects.

What is at stake, therefore, is the possibility that, in traumatic situations, intelligence will detach from affect, thus conquering a much broader sphere of action. The intellect, apart from sensitivity, thus acquires airs of self-sufficiency, arousing a sense of triumph and a minimum of appeasement despite trauma (Mello, Fêres-Carneiro, & Magalhães, 2015; Mello & Herzog, 2012). In this sense, we refer to the certain idealization of wisdom against the sense of vulnerability, powerlessness and unpredictability inherent in trauma (Cabré, 2017). According to Pinheiro (2016, p. 158), “[...] intelligence is a small word for such hard work”. Indeed, as Ferenczi (1992b, p. 78) states, “[...] we all know that children who have suffered a lot, morally and physically, acquire the physiognomic features of age and wisdom”.

In a note from his *Clinical Diary*, Ferenczi (1990, p. 77) clearly points out the relationship between trauma and intelligence: “[...] the intelligence of the unfortunate child behaved, for in the fantasies that were being analyzed, as a separate person, whose purpose was to quickly bring help to an almost mortally wounded child”. In fact, the intellect comes to care for itself, as an ‘inner guardian angel’ (Ferenczi, 1990). In another clinical note, we can follow a similar description:

The patient becomes terribly intelligent; instead of hating his/her father or mother, he/she was so deeply immersed in thinking about the psychic mechanisms, motives, even feelings (with the help of his/her knowledge of the latter), that he/she came to apprehend the previously unbearable situation with complete clarity, since he/she had ceased to exist as being with feelings (Ferenczi, 1990, p. 251).

For Ferenczi (1992b, p. 78), “[...] it is all truly as if, under the pressure of imminent danger, a fragment of ourselves splits into the form of a self-perceptive instance that seeks help”. Thus, a part of the self begins to play the maternal or paternal role, as it were, making the abandonment of caring figures null and void. This part is charged with being alert to everything and everyone, maintaining the fragile balance of which he/she is guardian (Pinheiro, 2016). In a way, “[...] the individual stands above him/herself and the aggressor, reaching ever higher levels of abstraction” (Cabré, 2017, p. 252, our translation)⁶. From this perspective,

the intellect becomes a substitute for parental care and the child renounces any hope of help from others. In other words, intelligence engages in self-care, freeing the child from the danger of being at the mercy of untrustworthy adults with whom he/she does not feel safe.

From the Ferenczian perspective, the fear of angry, somewhat mad adults “[...] transforms the child into a psychiatrist” (Ferenczi, 1992c, p. 105). In this sense, self-care falls into the care of adults, which is often a family situation of reversed affiliation: the child becomes the father or mother of his/her own parents (Mello et al., 2015). From this follows, then, a process of ‘inversion of adaptation1’ (Lieberman, 2013), through which children adapt to the needs of adults rather than the other way around. To this end, the needs dear to the universe of children have to be disregarded and placed in parentheses. In this scenario, we can witness the development of a kind of meteorological activity, as stated by Rabain (2010), regarding the ‘baby meteo’. The author thus refers to children who study variations in the family environment to adapt appropriately, just as meteorologists study the sky to predict the weather.

This is what Ferenczi (1992c) calls the ‘terrorism of suffering’, from which children are forced to resolve all kinds of family conflicts and carry the burden of often intergenerational dramas. There is not an altruistic goal in this megalomaniac takeover of responsibility on the part of the child towards his/her parents, but rather an attempt to restore some stability in the environment by ensuring his/her own life within the family. In this way, they become good and helpful individuals, often called perfect children, extending to others the care and wisdom gained from hard work.

Under these conditions, the extraordinary nature of the intellect coexists side by side with the ordinary routine of a life without affective presence. In this sense, the advancement of the child’s maturation processes requires a high dose of sacrifice, paying with an expensive coin for the infant universe: affective spontaneity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

During an analysis session, a ‘wise’ child, about eight years old, expressed his/her desire to invent a time machine. Such a machine would allow him/her to be a child as an adult. Here is a beautiful picture of the analytical process in the clinical practice with the ‘wise babies’. It would therefore be up to the analyst to ensure the necessary conditions for a reversal of direction in the processes of maturation through the ways of regression and confident submission to analytical care. In these ways, the child’s ‘inner guardian angel’ can be gradually transferred to the analyst, a figure capable of sustaining the place of care, recognition and supposed knowledge, averse to trauma.

Considering that the cleavage is engendered in the loneliness, silence and helplessness of the child in relation to the adults important to his/her existence, it would be a bond to restore trust. In these terms, the analyst’s spontaneity and honesty are presented as the most favorable means of the analytical situation with the ‘wise babies’, as opposed to the analyst’s neutrality and often insincerity. In the words of Ferenczi (1990, p. 161), “[...] the patient must feel that the analyst shares with him/her the pain and also makes sacrifices to soothe it”. Recognition of suffering is understood here as the opposite of denial, especially in the case of children who distrust their own perceptions. Thus, it is essential to build an ‘appropriate psychological atmosphere’ (Ferenczi, 1992b), conducive to ‘lower the guard’, with less vigilance, accessing a new way of existing.

Therefore, according to Ferenczi (1992d), the analyst must be able to ‘feel with’ his/her patient, valuing the sensitive way in communication. The concept of ‘tact’ (Ferenczi, 1992d) is fundamental to understanding the willingness to get in touch with what the patient feels. In this sense, it is necessary to tune into the most diverse modulations of affective expression, experiencing the impact of the child’s suffering on his/her own flesh (Reis, 2017). In this context, it is important not to lose the dimension of the language difference between us, adult analysts, and the children under analysis, with the risk of reproducing the violence of denial. It would then require readiness to experience with the child his/her sense of him/herself and the world, opening themselves to the codes, meanings and vocabularies of childhood.

It should be pointed out that the integration of the cleaved parts is not the ultimate objective of analysis, therefore, it is not a matter of ‘uncleaving’ the psyche. From this perspective, we consider it necessary to give up the unifying claims, supporting the fragmentary functioning, without forgetting that the connections, the connections and the associations are painful. It is noteworthy that cleavage is not just a pathological reaction, but a survival strategy or an attempt to heal the trauma (Gondar, 2017b). Certainly, it is important to build bridges between intellect and affect; however, such bridges should be viewed as an offshoot of the advancement of the analytic process and not as a labor demand to be imposed. Thus, according to Ferenczi (1990, p. 119), “[...] the task of analysis is to call the soul to life from these ashes”. Or, “[...] revive, as it were, the soul that surrendered, tactfully but energetically, and slowly bring this dead or cleaved fragment to admit that it is not really dead” (Ferenczi, 1990, p. 73).

We must then realize where life pulsates, betting that not only can the brutally destroyed and dead part be reborn, but unprecedented forms of life experimentation can emerge. This implies an analytical doing capable of ‘vitalizing or revitalizing’ (Coelho Junior, 2018), thus embracing flashes of desire, embers under ashes. Thus, it is to understand the analysis as a process of witnessing pain, but also as a space of reconciliation and reenchantment with the world (Reis, 2017). Perhaps, then, the intellectual fragments find some rest and new circuits for affections are created. In the words of Ferenczi (1992a, p. 117):

We may not be able to offer you everything of your childhood, but just the fact that we can come to help you provides the impetus for a new life, in which you close the dossier of all that has been lost without return, and besides that, once the first step has been taken, it is permissible to be content with what life offers, in spite of everything, not to reject everything together [...]

After all, it is worth insisting on the creation of a possibly better world, continuous creation, always to be done. Finally, the poetry of Wislawa Szymborska (2016, p. 229) once again serves as a reminder: “to distinguish pain from everything it’s not”.

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Notas al final

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- 4.- “[...] se trata de una experiencia con el objeto en la que el aspecto más importante no es tanto lo que ha sucedido, sino lo que no ha sucedido”.
- 5.- “[...] le sujet se retire de l’expérience traumatique primaire, il se retire e se coupe de sa subjectivité”.
- 6.- “[...] el individuo se coloca por encima de sí mismo y del agresor, alcanzando niveles de abstracción y generalización siempre más elevados”.