

Gift and Duty Configurations Within the Family Environment

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Abstract

Introduction: *In the present article we aimed to explore, identify and represent the problematic present experiences relating to the gift and duty phenomenon within the family context. Furthermore, our focus on the psychotherapeutic approach from a psycho-genealogical point of view is intended to offer psychotherapists the possibilities to identify the occurrence pattern of the change phenomenon. We have also tried to help clients make the best use of their resources during the therapeutic sessions and to identify their own needs concerning the manifestation of their autonomy and self respect.*

Objectives: *Our objective is to determine the generational effects of gift and duty relationships and their effect on parent-children relationships. Our hypothesis was that the identification of specific trans-generational dynamics concerning gift and duty, has an impact on the psycho (pathological) aspects in daily life experiences.*

Methods: *A qualitative approach involving clients was conducted in order to discover the dynamics of gift and duty phenomenological and dynamic relationships in parent-children (adult) relationships. For the evaluation of the gift and duty phenomenon we used drama-genograms and an experiential grid, extracting relevant psychotherapeutic aspects.*

Results: *The case study analysis indicates specific relationships between parents and children concerning certain difficulties in the gift and duty dynamics. Every case study indicates a specific trans-generational schema of the interrelationship between family members throughout generations.*

Conclusions: *The use of psycho-genealogical therapeutic procedure sessions helped the participants get the proper understanding and implement a healthy separation process in parent-children relationship.*

Keywords: *gift, duty, family context, psycho-genealogical approach*

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I. Introduction

Interpersonal relationships are defined in terms of “offering”, “receiving” and “restitution”. These aspects could be considered naturally inherited traits (because they were passed on by our ancestors) and at the same time, they carry a deeply personal and interpersonal aspect. Previous experiments concerning the origins of these three traits have been based on the body of studies of anthropologist Marcel Mauss. The author’s approach of interpersonal relationships through the ensemble of exchanges taking place between individuals is correlated with *the gift*. By analysing the way in which people relate to each other and with their societies we can identify the existence of interchangeable links within the social organisation in terms of *social justice and rights*.

With regard to the identification of the dynamics of gift and duty in order to understand the *stakes* and the *rationale of the exchange phenomenon (of gift and duty)* we will be approaching three perspectives:

- The sociological argumentation (explanations of the dynamics of gift and duty based on the study of various interpersonal exchanges researched on pre-Western societies yet applied in the modern society, according to Marcel Mauss);

- The psychological argumentation through which we explain the reports that appear between two or more individuals with regards to the exchange phenomenon perceived from a means of realisation view-point, more precisely from the point of view of existential dynamics’ norms and principles on which interpersonal relationships are built.

The psycho-genealogical argumentation through the study of exchange problematic (of gift and duty) within the genealogical context analyses its dynamics within the family group, concentrating on the following aspects:

- The study of subjective and inter-subjective mechanisms which create links between two or more individuals and which aim at establishing certain relationships based on the exchange of certain aspects internal and external subjectivity;

If we are to consider the study of internal and external psychological aspects starting from the traits of “offering” - “receiving” and “giving back, then we should consider two perspectives of analysis and exploration:

- The study of the gift and duty complex from the inter-generational perspective, and by analysing the ensemble of community and family mythologies pertaining to the referred issue and the study of family unconscious phenomenon from a trans-generational viewpoint, of unconscious alliances, denial pacts,

invisible loyalties, fine agreements which are established within the family group; we are referring to the unconscious mental transmission and to psychopathological aspects generated by inter-relational difficulties and dysfunctionalities over the generations.

The numerous gifts and duties originate in a genealogical chain in which each is represented by what *has been (received)*” and what *“will be (offered)”*, the expression of the act of *“receiving from others”* and of *“passing on to others”*. This genealogical chain is passed on from generation to generation as French psychoanalyst Alberto Eiguer stated, thus generating a specific pathology he described as “the gift and duty pathology”. The intergenerational and trans-generational mental transmission imply a continuous transmission process of various mental contents from one subject to the next with the receiver having to metabolise them and thus integrate them in his own mental representation system” (Eiguer, 2005c, pp. 26-31).

In accordance with prior statements, we can say that parents play an essential part in the life of every child. They are the first figures the child bases his or her development on. The birth of mental life is resulted from the interaction between the subjectivity of the parent and the receptivity of a newborn. The baby needs its parental figures (especially the mother) in order to be contained from a point of view of her interpretations of his experiences which at the beginning are chaotic. Through the maternal function as well as the paternal one, the child learns to integrate his experiences and to make sense of them. Therefore he will be able to differentiate between himself and the others and to make his needs known. The relationship with his parents becomes paramount because they represent the main model of internalizing the external world. Through relating, an exchange is born which the psychoanalysts have named inter-subjectivity. The quality of the inter-subjective relationship greatly depends on the emotions the parents’ project on the child. These will constitute the first trajectories according to which the child will feel and act in relation to himself and others.

II. Objectives

Our main objective for the present study has been the identification of the means through which relational exchanges are performed from a psycho-genealogical perspective, being centred on the parent-child relationship and based on the duty phenomenon.

Specific objectives included:

1. The identification, exploration and evaluation of the methods through which exchanges are made at the level of the family;

2. The exploration and identification of the types of gifts and duties with a determinate role in the relationships between parents and children;

3. The exploration and identification of needs, expectations and desires in the parent-children relationships;

4. Assisting clients in reversing the mythologies of the parent-child relations and anchoring them (the children) in their own needs.

The therapeutic end-hypotheses formulated were:

1. We assume that the parent-child relational dynamic centred on the duty phenomenon gives rise to relational difficulties;

2. We assume that the parent-child relational dynamic centred on the duty phenomenon generates inter-familial role disturbances and difficulties with regard to children admitting to their own needs.

III. Method

Design and analysis

We have chosen a *humanistic, phenomenological and clinical* approach. Our study analyses the sense and the significance of the observed behaviours and phenomena, referring to the gift and duty interactions within parent-child relations. Thus, the methodological process and vision we have been working with (the trans-generational approach) closely analyses the implications and significance of the observed phenomena in an interconnected manner which corresponds to multiple synchronised versus unsynchronised analysis approaches (intra-psychic, intra-family and trans-generational). In order to underline the sense and the significance of the exchange phenomenon we have utilised the following specific methods:

The qualitative analysis, which is a discursive and significant reformulation process aimed at explaining or theorising a testimony, experience or phenomenon (Paillé, 1996 apud Mucchielli, 2002).

The clinical observation which is a research method that allows for the development of certain models for understanding the observed mental realities and for the tackling of pathological phenomena. At the same time this method is a qualitative method aimed at gathering data and at supplementing other information: the real behaviour of the participant, his attitudes during the therapeutic meeting. According to Albert Ciccone (1998) the clinical observation stands apart from the medical concepts, in that it tries to describe not only what appears but also to regroup various information in a logical manner. This activity is however supported by

a material centred project and aimed at the restitution of the observational ensemble (Ciccone 1998 apud Pedinielli, 2005).

Materials, measures and procedure

In order to capture the sense and significance of the exchange phenomenon we propose the following:

1. *The genogram and drama genogram* which allow the therapist to perceive patient relationships and life events in a systematic manner. This represents a global systemic evaluation, providing a clinical and efficient summary through which the therapist can gain access to information about an unfamiliar case.

A drama genogram is a methodological innovation brought forth by Iolanda Mitrofan and Denisa Godeanu (Stoica) (2005). "The drama genogram is an analysis instrument used in reconstructing significant family roles and relationships based on the dramatisation of "here and now" as well as through trans-generational fixing, using the classic genogram merely as a provocative support; they are specific to the Trans-generational Unifying Therapy (T.Tr.U.) and therefore we considered it to be more appropriately referred to as "drama-genogram" (Mitrofan, Stoica, 2005, pp.97-99), (Mitrofan, Godeanu, Godeanu, 2010, pp.161-164).

2. In order to ease the understanding of the studied issue, apart from the use of a drama-genogram we have developed a *conceptual marker-schema (clinical configuration)* in order to explore, evaluate and intervene in the exchange situation (the dynamics of gift and duty) which may allow for a more structured and easy analysis of information in an experiential manner. Thus, the proposed conceptual marker-schema contains the following elements:

- The existence of a hard to manage relationship
- The existence of parent projections (in their state as a donor) over the children - the adults (in their state of receivers - beneficiaries);
- The projections purpose or intention;
- Metaphor events which are traumatic for the parents;
- The existence of the trans-generational mental transmission context - the child is assigned a mission;
- The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude demands from the parent required by the child;
- The symptoms, accusations coming from the beneficiary and the replies to the parental projections;
- The existence of the family duty-centred myth;
- The psycho-therapeutic trans-generational intervention.

After evaluating the relational state of the assisted clients we have made a selection of the existential passages from the therapeutic perspective casuistically presented in what follows.

IV. Results - case studies

Accompanying the clients through means of drama genograms has allowed for the identification of psycho-pathological aspects of the exchange phenomenon in the ancestors-descendants relationship.

We also point out that during the case presentations we have extracted passages of the cases in which the dynamics between gift and duty have been observed in a family context, the presentation of client problematics as well as of collateral elements were not a part of our study.

In what follows we will be presenting examples of cases in which psycho (pathological) aspects of the gift and duty dynamics at a trans-generational level have been observed.

Case 1. “Your love is hurting me” or the destructive force of family bonds

Ana is a 33 year old client who comes to therapy because she has difficulty in finding a job she enjoys. Although graduation from a university allowed her to be well employed, Ana cannot manage to picture herself as an economist on the long term. This perspective illustrates another important aspect of Ana’s circumstance. She lives at home with her mother and grandmother. Ana claims that she doesn’t get along with them at all because they don’t let her do anything. This kind of behaviour from her mother and grandmother is an old one, dating back to when Ana was a child, according to her. Ana was appreciated only when she strived to learn. Presently Ana fails to see a future based on her studies. She has held temporary jobs. Her conflicts with her mother and grandmother are based on their reproaches. They claim to have sacrificed their lives in order to raise her without asking for anything in return. They (and especially her mother who couldn’t manage to get her desired profession) sacrificed themselves raising her and keeping her in school. Ana feels incapable of escaping the conflict with her mother and grandmother who force her to make important decisions for her future.

Case analysis

A relationship situation which is difficult to manage. The tense relationship with the mother and the grandmother as well as Ana’s difficulty in finding a job that would make her happy.

The existence of certain projections from the

parents: The mother projects on Ana personal dissatisfactions regarding her professional and personal situation.

The purpose or intention of the projection. This projection upon Ana allows her mother to use Ana as a means of fulfilling personal immaterialised dreams.

Metaphor events traumatic for the parents. The analysis of Ana’s family genogram allowed for the identification of dysfunctional couple events, between her mother and father, who left Ana when she was 6 years old. Her mother never remarried nor did she engage in another relationship.

The existence of the trans-generational mental-transmission context which the child has to fulfil.

The trans-generational schema of gift and duty within Ana’s family:

„A” –the grandmother, emotionally unavailable in relation to „B” – Ana’s mother;

„B” – Ana’s mother (emotionally bereft child) – sacrificial mother for Ana;

„C” – Ana – the duty child.

How is the duty aspect trans-generationally involved in the present inter-subjective trio?

Originally, Ana’s grandmother relates by means of the sacrifice she communicates within the relationship with her daughter through emotional unavailability (emotional coldness). The trans-generational space in which Ana is living and the mission for an accomplished career.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude related demands from the parents upon the child. Ana’s mother demands that she does more than she wants.

The symptoms, the accusations coming from the beneficiary and the replies to parental projections. Ana’s feelings of uselessness, her interrupted personal development, the lack of accomplishment in a profession that might offer her satisfactions, the lack of motivation.

As a solution for her situation, Ana chooses to counter-identify with her mother’s and grandmother’s scenarios. She adopts regressive emotional attitudes and manifests difficulties in assuming her role-sex identity. Ana assumes a self-sabotaging scenario on account of her mother’s and grandmother’s pressure.

The existence of duty-centred family myth. Ana has the duty of succeeding her life. This duty is born from the sacrifices her mother and grandmother have made in order to raise her, their personal sacrifices. The vertical orientation of their sacrifice is characterised by the following dynamic: abandonment, couple dysfunctions and her

mother's emotional inadequacies.

The psychotherapeutic experiential intervention. Ana is under the effect of the destructive gift of narcissistic investment coming from a mother who has made numerous sacrifices in order to raise her. Her mother's sacrifice plays an essential role in her relationship with Ana. Ana's duty is equivalent to the sacrifice at the trans-generational level; it is a reparatory-value duty. The importance of duty is the hallmark of the trans-generational scenario in the relational equation between the grandmother, mother and Ana. Ana has the duty of repairing the relationship between her mother and grandmother and thus to fulfil her mother's wishes after her career had failed. The expression of Ana's family scenario centred on exchange is marked by the colossal weight of duty towards the donor (the mother) - the duty towards a life consumed in the service of others. The duty is born out of the obligation of not returning in kind the offer which has been repeatedly reiterated.

Duty also consists of the incapacity to give in return on the backdrop of hateful feelings towards the donor: through the attempts at return in the best of cases represented by the destructive act directed at herself, Ana is trying to self-sabotage and to give up certain needs.

The psychotherapeutic intervention in Ana's case aimed at the following aspects:

- Clarifying the family scenario and the roles of the family trio;
- Identifying the different needs of the mother and discovering personal needs in her relationship with her mother and grandmother as well as communicating them;
- Assuming personal needs of development and implementing them in daily scenarios by searching for a job;
- Identifying personal resources in order to cope with the family situation and to maintain the implemented changes;
- Rethinking relationships with the mother and grandmother.

Case 2. George, the duty child

George is a 26 year-old student. He came in for therapy because he cannot have a relationship. George's physical aspect is closer to that of an adolescent rather than a 26 year-old man. The analysis of his life context, by means of a genogram indicates that he is living with his mother and that he has no stable relationship with a woman. George's mother asks of him to come home after work in order to spend time with him. George's mother has no friends to spend time with. George is at

the same time his mother's confidant. The genogram also indicates that George's parents had divorced because of the tensions between them, when George was 15. George stopped seeing his father and at present the two have a formal relationship. George's mother remarried but divorced her second husband as well, following arguments about money and George's upbringing, a similar situation between George's mother and father.

The analysis of couples' relationships and the masculine role, both on the father's line as well as the mother's, points to men that George has described as being "tough, violent and absent". George says that he encounters certain difficulties in initiating an erotic partnership as well as insecurity concerning his own masculinity. In his adolescence George had presented to his mother two friends with whom he had tried to begin a relationship when he was 19 but his mother disagreed. This discouraged George from continuing the relationships. George stated that he felt frustrated and overwhelmed by the fact that he has to spend his time with his mother and that he has always felt guilty that his parents separated. He believed that he was the cause for their lack of harmony and that his father hated him.

Case analysis

The existence of a hard to manage relational situation. George's situation, having to take care of his mother, blocked his relationship prospects. The unavailability for a partner relationship also becomes clear from George's incapacity to initiate an erotic partnership.

The existence of parent projections: The projection of his mother's marital failure.

The purpose or intention of the projection: Keeping George in a "you shouldn't marry" scenario. The projection of control, the needs of the mother projected over her son. The projection of her personal relationship and couple failure.

Metaphor-events traumatic for the parents. The first marriage resulted in a divorce and a similar second marriage.

The existence of trans-generational psychological-mission transmission that the child has to accomplish. Conflictual relationships, divorces on both sides of the family (paternal and maternal). The absence of an inherited male model with which George could identify. George's mission of being loyal to his mother and the family group. He is in essence obligated and unconsciously loyal to the couple scenario of his parents and ancestors.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude requirements of the parent from the child. To take care of the mother, not to leave the house for too long.

The symptoms, accusations from the beneficiary and answer to the parental projections. Feelings of not being accepted and difficulties in assuming his own masculinity. The difficulties of initiating and maintaining an erotic partnership. The feeling of guilt within his relationship with the parents.

The existence of the family myth centred on duty. The duty of taking care of his mother.

The experiential psychotherapeutic intervention.

The exploration of George's present existential context and its evolution allowed for the identification of the following relevant aspects on which the intervention for this case was based:

- The clarification of the parents' couple relationship in order to free George of guilt.
- The clarification of his needs and expectations with regards to his mother and expression of said needs;
- The clarification of the relationship with his father and the renewal of the relationship by George;
- The clarification of difficulties linked to a partnership and directing George towards erotic partnership initiation;

Case 3. Florin - the son that sets himself up for failure.

Florin is a 36 year-old man who lives with his girlfriend. They came in for therapy sessions after several postponed attempts, as he declares. His decision to come in for therapy was based on the fact that he is no longer content with himself and that he has a big issue with his intrusive father. The father-related accusations revolve around the latter's constant reproaches that Florin hasn't made anything with his life, that he could have gone to university like everyone else and have a safe profession to help him provide for himself. Florin has had a series of jobs but never a stable one. At present he is employed in a sporting bet establishment.

Florin's attitude denotes that things are generally very difficult. He quits at the slightest obstacle that comes up. His general behaviour indicates an expression and attitude blockage that Florin cannot explain. Moreover he becomes very tense and irritable when confronted with a task. His first thought is that "I can't do this, it's too complicated" and has a sense of "fear and panic I would say", "I analyse the task from every angle, ask a hundred questions and finally give up on it". After asking Florin if his relationship with his father has always been like this, he explains that his father used to beat him a lot when he was a child and that Florin's grandfather acted the same towards his

father. According to Florin, his mother had a passive attitude towards his father when it came to him. "My mother didn't step in when my father was beating me, I don't know if they talked about it afterwards", "I have always felt humiliated in relation to my father".

Case analysis

The existence of hard to handle relational situations. The father relationship. The difficulties Florin had to cope with when performing tasks.

The existence of parent projections: the father's performance projection upon Florin and the self projected parental education model.

The purpose or intention of the projection. Saving and upholding a good family image. Having a successful child (Florin).

Metaphor-events traumatic for the parents.

The abusive relationship between Florin and his father.

The existence of trans-generational psychological-mission transmission that the child has to accomplish.

The existence of the trans-generational relational context indicates the relational equation of the parent model:

„A” – The violent and emotionally absent grandfather in relation to Florin's father.

„B” – Florin's father, emotionally absent and authoritative in relation to “C” - Florin.

„C” – Florin who feels humiliated by his father chooses not to go to university.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude requirements from the child's parents. The need for performance and the performance myth, imposed on the parental line.

The symptoms, accusations of the beneficiary and the response for the parental projections. Blockage, lack of motivation, self programmed for failure, tension and bouts of anger.

The existence of duty-centred duty myth. The myth of carrying on the family name, the performance myth.

Psycho-therapeutic experiential intervention.

Accompanying Florin by means of a drama genogram allowed us to identify the key fears and intervention markers such as:

- the clarification of Florin's needs in relation to his father with whom he counter-identifies; Florin sets himself in a scenario that breaks down his family performance myth;

- the clarification of his relationship with his father from the point of view of the feelings of humiliation felt by Florin;

- stating his needs with regards to his father

and establishing certain boundaries between himself and his father;

- discovering personal needs and clarifying the arising difficulties Florin encounters while performing his tasks;

- Florin's emotional development and surpassing relationship hurdles in relation to his father;

- rethinking the parental model.

Case 4. Cristina and the duty to be successful

Cristina is a 38 year old woman. She came in for therapy on account of her not being content with her present situation and finding herself in an existential impasse. The exploration of Cristina's existential context indicates the fact that she was a successful pupil. Concerning erotic partnerships, Cristina states that "I have yet to meet love as they say, I've only been in short-lived relationships..." At present Cristina lives on her own but her parents visit her almost daily, helping her with house-related tasks even though Cristina doesn't want them to.

Their involvement is a constant cause of frustration, which results in conflicts in which the parents become upset with her and her mother cries, feeling rejected by her daughter. Cristina's family genogram indicates a dependency in relating and exercising control which are born of the abandonment and loss themes. Cristina's grand and great grandparents were forced to leave their lands and homes after conflicts with the authorities at the time. In their turn, Cristina's parents were unable to hold on to their parent's home which they had to sell.

Cristina says that her parents sacrificed themselves in order to raise their daughter and they only ask in return of their daughter to be successful and hold a well-paid job. Her mother blames Cristina for not trying to achieve more, for not extending her collaborations in order to live a better life. Cristina however counter-identifies with the accomplishments demanded by her mother, feeling satisfied with her present income. Her mother's pressure doubled by her father's encouragements make Cristina feel even at her age as though "...having a duty to satisfy my parents, to repay them somehow for their sacrifices during my faculty years". Concerning Cristina's needs for professional success, she declares that she didn't necessarily wish to accomplish more after graduation, but that what motivated her to be successful during high school and university was the joy felt by her parents. Cristina's genogram indicated that her mother failed to go to university as Cristina's grandparents would have

wanted. Therefore Cristina's mother described her grandmother as being dissatisfied with her on account of her professional evolution which resulted in an emotional withdrawal.

Case analysis

The existence of hard to handle relational situations. The relationship with the parents.

The existence of parent projections: Projecting personal accomplishment needs and the abandonment felt by Cristina's mother with regards to her grandmother.

The purpose or intention of the projection. Cristina's professional achievements that were absent in the case of her mother.

Metaphor-events traumatic for the parents. The parents' sacrifices in raising Cristina, the loss of their home.

The existence of trans-generational psychological-mission transmission that the child has to accomplish. A trans-generational relationship pattern based on abandonment and relational dependency.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude requirements from the child's parents. Increased performance on the part of Cristina and her career.

The symptoms, accusations of the beneficiary and the response for the parental projections. Self dissatisfaction and feelings of duty as well as the feeling of lack of performance in order to make her parents happy. Counter-identification with the parental scenario.

The existence of duty-centred duty myth. The performance myth.

Psycho-therapeutic experiential intervention. By analysing the trans-generational context of Cristina's family we have identified the trans-generational duty-centred schema:

„A” – Cristina's grandmother who was displeased with her daughter not being professionally successful, didn't complete her studies and married young.

„B” – Cristina's mother who felt rejected by her mother.

„C” – Cristina, the daughter is appreciated only by being successful.

The psychotherapeutic intervention centred on the following aspects:

- clarifying the relationship with her mother;
- clarifying Cristina's needs with regard to her parents and establishing some borders regarding her relationship with Cristina's personal space;
- downplaying expectations linked to Cristina and clarifying the duty feeling she has in relation to her parents.
- reinterpreting her relationship with her parents;

Case 5. Marius doesn't know how to say "No"

Marius is a 13 year old boy who was brought by his mother to therapy on account of him being absent, a dreamer and because he is not like the other boys his age. According to his mother, he has to know more things about life. Marius lives in a family in which all members attended at least one university and received acknowledgments. His mother and father had many accomplishments and started their own business. Marius is not an award winner yet he is a very good student, as his mother states. Her reasons of disapproval are actually her personal misgivings. She is critical about herself, saying that she is not a good mother, which is also underlined by her husband. The mother is the only one involved in Marius's education with the father being gone most of the times on business.

The mother's disapproval is also linked to Marius's lack of maturity and that he often behaves as a small child. In the mother's opinion, being mature is linked to having a life goal and with knowing what profession Marius wants to have. The parents' wish is for Marius to take over the family business yet Marius doesn't know what he wants to do, he has not considered what profession he feels attracted to. The pressures of the parents make Marius a tense and stressed child who doesn't wish to socialise or help with house tasks because he is always scolded and compared with other children. He is afraid of his father and has difficulties in refusing external suggestions. His mother is worried because Marius has been persuaded on a number of occasions to take responsibility for acts he didn't commit. Moreover, she is worried that Marius is a loner at school and has no social interactions, no friends. By analysing his genogram we have identified a requirement for performance within the family (his mother feeling a pressure coming from her parents) and dysfunctional relations between Marius's parents and grandparents.

Case analysis

The existence of hard to handle relational situations. The disapproval of Marius's lack of performance and the mother's concerns that Marius has no friends and is unable to say no.

The existence of parent projections: The mother's and father's personal needs of performance projections.

The purpose or intention of the projection. Perpetuating the family performance myth.

Metaphor-events traumatic for the parents. The performance pressure forced upon the mother by her parents and her invalidation by her husband.

The existence of trans-generational psychological-mission transmission that the child has to accomplish. A trans-generational relationship pattern centred on the performance myth.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude requirements from the child's parents. Increased performance on the part of Marius.

The symptoms, accusations of the beneficiary and the response for the parental projections. Marius's inability to express himself and his incapacity to make friends.

The existence of duty-centred duty myth. The performance myth.

Psychotherapeutic experiential intervention. The existential context of the mother reveals the performance myth with the mother being a successful pupil who never let her parents down. Moreover, the mother doesn't feel validated by her husband in the mother role. This pushes her to put pressure on Marius who has to be the best at what he does. The mother thus projects her own lack of confirmation coming from the grandparents during her childhood, on Marius.

The mission that Marius has to fulfil is that of maintaining the family performance myth.

Considering the mother-child context the intervention was centred on the following aspects:

- clarifying the role of the performance myth and determining the mother to escape from it;
- clarifying the couple relationship of Marius's parents;
- rebuilding Marius's relationship with his father;
- expressing Marius's needs and confirming them in relation to his parents;
- unlocking Marius from an emotion-action perspective and orientating him towards making friends.

Case 6. Mihaela and the duty to be a mother.

Mihaela is 24 years old and is a student. Although it may seem strange, she comes to therapy with her mother. The reason for them both attending and not just Mihaela as was expected after the phone request were the repeated misunderstandings between the two, the mother not listening to Mihaela. More precisely, her mother is unhappy with Mihaela's refusal of her mother's version of the future. The future in question sets Mihaela out as a successful professional, a good wife "who most importantly will have a child, why else would you get married for?" (stated the mother).

Mihaela's behaviour attracts attention through her lack of maturity. She resembles a 14 year old adolescent. This is underlined by her mother's

permission to speak out or not. From the discussions with the mother and daughter we learn of the former's plan for the latter. Apart from the numerous reasons the mother is unhappy with Mihaela, the mother wishes (bordering command) that her daughter begins a relationship with a man with which she must absolutely have a child "because otherwise you can't be fulfilled...a woman is happy only after having a baby, her life is meaningless otherwise". This desire is not particularly easy for Mihaela if we are to consider that she hasn't had a boyfriend before and so her romantic life would be at the beginning and "under the rule of her mother" and of her need to control (the mother has found a 26 year old boy to be Mihaela's boyfriend and with whom the mother has a good relationship). The mother is concerned about not seeing her daughter with a boy so far. By exploring and clarifying the mother's and daughter's (different) wishes we find out that the mother was unable to have children and that Mihaela was adopted. Let us remember that the mother's utmost request was for Mihaela to marry the boy and so as to be fulfilled by having a child.

After exploring the relationship between Mihaela's mother and her grandmother, we can observe that Mihaela's grandmother had accused Mihaela's mother on numerous occasions of not being able to mother children or have a happy marriage. Mihaela's attitude towards her mother's plan was one of retreating more than rebelling. Mihaela finds it very difficult to express her point of view about her mother's plan; she does not dare to do so. Mihaela's relationship with her father is a formal relationship in which the father is more absent, a relationship which greatly resembles Mihaela's maternal grandparents' relationship. From the analysis of Mihaela's and her grandmother's relationship we find that the grandmother made numerous rebukes that she was "unable to have her own child". Regarding this, Mihaela's mother declares that she had always felt unaccepted by her mother and that "her love towards me after I married was always conditioned by my ability to have children".

Case analysis

The existence of hard to handle relational situations. The relationship with the mother and Mihaela's difficulties in expressing her needs to her mother.

The existence of parent projections: The projection of personal needs of birthing a child. The narcissistic wound of Mihaela's mother regarding her inability to carry a child. This wound has been perpetually refreshed by Mihaela's grandmother criticism. The projection of the mother's failure of giving birth to a child.

The purpose or intention of the projection.

Reparatory purpose, Mihaela has to have a child because her mother failed. In this sense the emotional abandonment can be reversed.

Metaphor-events traumatic for the parents.

The mother's sacrifice, adopting Mihaela at her mother's insistence.

The existence of trans-generational psychological-mission transmission that the child has to accomplish. The maternal unavailability on the female line. A trans-generational relationship pattern based on the duty of carrying on the family through an heir. Reparatory mission to be carried out by Mihaela.

The implicit or explicit existence of certain attitude requirements from the child's parents. Requirements linked to giving birth to a child.

The symptoms, accusations of the beneficiary and the response for the parental projections. Counter-identification with the mother's plan. Mihaela's emotional regression.

The existence of duty-centred duty myth. The duty to become a mother myth.

The psycho-therapeutic experiential intervention.

The psycho-therapeutic intervention consisted of the following aspects:

- Clarification of the relationship between Mihaela and her mother;
- Assisting the mother to understand her own failure and giving new significance to her relationship with her mother;
- Assisting the mother with the aim of interrupting her projective identification with Mihaela;
- Eliminating the mother's guilt and removing the duty myth;
- Mihaela's emotional growth and self expression of personal needs.

V. Discussions

The analysis of the previously presented cases underlines the interfering and maladaptive relational aspects within a relational family frame of the assisted clients. The identified dynamics of gift and duty under various aspects indicates the effects of scenarios centred on pathological duty. The client's life scenario is a trap-scenario which results in existential confusions and leads to the interference phenomenon influencing the balance of needs between ancestors (parents) and descendants (children).

VI. Conclusions

Identifying the relational dynamic from the

point of view of the changes in the family context has allowed for the underlining of dysfunctional interaction patterns in the parents-children relationship. At the same time the analysis of the gift and duty dynamics has allowed for the identification of the needs, expectations and children's (adults) desires with regards to their parents, of the way in which they are influenced by adjacent family myths, and which create veritable life scenarios with pathological implications at the level of the entire family group. Therefore, through trans-generational psychotherapeutic assistance the dysfunctional roles are identified and the client is increasingly accompanied towards his or her abandonment of a duty related scenario. As a result of the psycho-therapeutic process, the client is able to understand the difficulties he or she faces within the parent relationship at present as well as to discover and accept personal development needs in the context of personal and autonomously assumed choices.

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