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**Review of *Narrazione e intervento in psicologia clinica*
[*Narration and intervention in clinical psychology*] by Maria
Francesca Freda, Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2008, 238 pages**

Narratives and stories currently have an important social and research relevance. The linguistic and narrative turn in the 1980s notably contributed to this. The contributions of Geertz in anthropology, of Ricoeur in philosophy and of Bruner in psychology have had and have a strong influence on the new research and intervention models in the different social sciences and in applied fields such as education, health, psychotherapy, management, social work and community development.

Maria Francesca Freda's book proposes a reflection on the intersection between narration and psychoanalytically-oriented therapy. In this sense, the book carries on and enriches Shaffer's contribution, in the sense of proposing a global reconstruction of the psychoanalytical model of therapy from a narratological and constructivist viewpoint. This book has three parts, dedicated respectively to the narrative turn, the conceptual description of narrations and the narrative interventions in psychotherapeutic contexts.

In the first part, Freda reviews the semiotical and narrative turn from a paradigmatic and conceptual perspective. The theoretical starting point is critical and socio-cultural constructivism. Here the contributions of Gergen, Hoffman, Vigotskij, Benjamin, Brooks, Geertz, Ricoeur and Bruner merge are integrated. The socio-constructivist paradigm stresses the processual and semiotical conception of the mind, as well as the intersubjective character of the construction of meanings. Freda transcends traditional cognitivism and highlights the emotional roots of narrative processes in a trajectory that takes us from Freud to Anzieu.

However, this book goes beyond this general and paradigmatic framework to connect narratives with the conception of the mind and the unconscious of psychoanalysis. This task is developed in Chapter 3 – the longest in the work and the most difficult – dedicated to the discussion of these subject matters, paying special attention to the work of Bion and Matte Blanco, two creative and inspiring psychoanalysts. The semiotical conception of the unconscious involves a structural, processual, intersubjective and contextual perspective of the functioning of the mind. To deploy this approach, Freda presents Bion's concepts such as the alpha function, the container and the content, the oscillation between the schizo-paranoid position and the depressive position, and the theory of thought as transformation. Emotion is interpreted as a breakup of the links and assumes an anti-cognoscitive function. In this context, the development of the alpha function (Bion) or assymetrising function (Matte Blanco) give rise to thought and its capacity of integrating and transforming the symbolisation of the original

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emotional elements. The book's third chapter closes with a reference to Fornari's theory of affective codes and their referential functions (the use of a vocabulary and the assignation of a meaning) and actantial functions (the orientation of the action and the assumption of roles). The dynamic of the institutions based on the affective family model can be read from the codes derived from the relationship of kinship and family, with its own unconscious codes that via transference, conceived from a socio-cultural perspective, affectively models the life of institutions.

The semiotics of the functioning of the unconscious moves between a vertical axis (operative and differentiated categories derived from what is real, relationships of hierarchy and circularity) and a horizontal axis (the construction of nexus in the inter-subjective field). Freda proposes a model of the construction of meaning based on three perspectives, which she identifies from the terms *logos*, *mythos* and *pathos*. *Logos* represents the operative categorization and the explanatory classification of reality based on cause and effect relationships. *Mythos* refers to the conventional categorization, to the implicit processes and to the configurations of meaning, oriented by reasons, not by causes. *Pathos* refers to emotional categorization and the processes of affective symbolization. This triple structure integrate what is objective and subjective, conscious and unconscious, and is a good way of closing the first part of the book.

The second part of the book begins by connecting narratives with intervention in psychotherapy, paying special attention to the patient's request. The setting of the clinical conversation allows the creation of a context in which it is possible to think of the relationship between the narration and the critical dimension of the experience. This is especially delicate when there is a request for psychological support, linked to a crisis of the personal capacity to make decisions.

This second part of the work completes the contributions outlined in the initial chapters, relating to linguistics, the theory of discourse and structural semiotics, with references to Greimas, Benveniste, Austin, Searle and Genette, among others. The narrative discourse has different axes or levels: those that are paradigmatic, syntagmatic, pragmatic and pathemic. Reference, meaning, enunciation understood as an illocutary function, affective inter-subjectivity: all these perspectives are integrated and complemented.

Chapter seven, which closes the second part of the book, analyses the characteristics of the narratives, highlighting features such as belongingness, coherence, intertextuality, interpretative collaboration and narrative discourse. It also describes narratives from the perspective of the characters, the atmospheres, the events and the actions. The style of narration is described through the by now classic distinctions between annals, chronics and stories. These concepts complete the comprehension of the narratives and allow us to better tackle the last part of the book, which is dedicated to narrative-based interventions.

The two chapters of the third and last part of the book present the role of narratives in dynamic psychotherapy. Freda sets out from class psychoanalysis. Narratives and psychotherapy are inevitably linked. The communication process between the patient and the analyst is developed via language. This work is carried out in a complex context, between the past and the present, subjective memory and objective traces, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, person and context. The psychoanalyst carries out a narrative reconstruction, considering the patient's text as a symbolic version of a cryptic reality to which access can be gained via the analyst's interpretation. Freda picks up a well-known text of Freud from 1937, in which the

analyst is compared to an archeologist who constructs and reconstructs – these are the terms used by Freud – the forgotten material to give it a new form.

Narratives are inscribed in a context of relationships and are co-constructions of meaning. This is the bi-modal, bi-personal and inter-subjective perspective that the author defends, supported by the pioneering contributions of Spence and Shaffer of the 1980s. The perspectives of intervention are not limited to the analyst's room. The socio-cultural perspective is especially interested in the subjects in their institutional environment and daily vital issues. As possible areas of intervention Freda enumerates schools, hospitals, prisons, universities, associations, public and private local bodies and companies.

The setting – a term present in the title of the last two chapters of the book – is a theoretical and methodological device via which the psychologist creates the conditions of his/her work, interprets the problems that are presented and the story that the patient tells. This is a transitional space in which the action is suspended and the conventional regard is questioned, establishing uncertainty and reflection with the aim of empowering the discourse possibilities and the decision-making capacity.

The book has a few weak points. The work offers few specific indications about the methodology of intervention from narrative approaches. Freda limits herself to commenting, in the book's final chapter, a typology of proposed narratives: critical events, organizational stories, narration as a poetic space, collective events and collective narration. There is a relative repetition of similar arguments, presented in different chapters. It is a pity that Freda ignores in her book the biographical research of the last thirty years, whose contributions would have been able to importantly enrich it, particularly in the area of intervention models and techniques. None of these limitations is sufficient to detract from this dense, plural, original and well-written book.

This book can be interpreted and described in different ways, but there is no doubt that it is, among other things, an original and up-to-date contribution in the postmodern psychological area, seeking an integration of psychoanalysis and cultural psychology against the background of the narrational turn. The work's conceptual and theoretical solidity can serve as inspiration for psychologists, educators, social workers, communication specialists and researchers that need to do more deeply into the psychodynamic and socio-cultural components of narrative and biographical approaches.