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On the clinical changes of a severe personality disorder, investigated with the David Liberman algorithm (DLA)

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I. Goal

To investigate the clinical changes of a patient suffering from a severe personality disorder after one year of treatment

II. Method

We apply the David Liberman algorithm (DLA), which allows to detect wishes and defenses (as well as their state) in narrations and speech acts. Narration analysis allows to detect wishes and defenses in the extra-transference conflicts, and speech acts analysis permits to infer wishes and defenses in the intra-session conflicts. Repertory of wishes: Intrasomatic libido (IL), Primary oral (O1), secondary oral sadistic (O2), primary anal sadistic (A1), secondary anal sadistic (A2), urethral phallic (UPH) and genital phallic (GPH). Repertory of main defenses: Foreclosure of the affect, Foreclosure of reality and the ideal, Disavowal, Repression, In accordance with the goal, Creativity, Sublimation. The state of the defense can be: successful, failed or both.

Table I: DLA main concepts

Wishes	Defenses	State
IL	Foreclosure of the affect	Successful
O1 O2 A1	Disavowal	
	Foreclosure of reality and the ideal	
A2 UPH	Repression+characterologic traits	

GPH		
IL O1	In accordance with the goal	Successful/
O2 A1	Creativity	Failed
A2 UPH	Sublimation	
GPH		

The use of the DLA has been tested regarding its pre and post-dictive validity, its convergent validity, its construct validity, and its external validity. Among all of these studies there is a test of convergent validity between DMRS and DLA, which threw as a result a kappa coefficient of 0,737. The high grade of agreement between the judges is confirmed by the result of the *Statistical Significance* of 0,000, which means that the probability of such a high value of a Kappa of 0,737 of agreement appearing between the judges by chance is 0, i. e. that the probability of a highly significant result due to random is improbable (P = 0,000). The application of the DLA tools throws multivariate outcomes: several wishes and defenses can be detected, each one with a different relevance.

III. The problem

In a previous research we investigated wishes and defenses (as well as their state) in three sessions corresponding to the first year of treatment of a patient suffering from a severe personality disorder. We applied the David Liberman algorithm (DLA), which allows to detect wishes and defenses (as well as their state) in narrations and enacted episodes. The analysis of narrations and enacted episodes of Nilda revealed that the same psychic combination between wishes and defenses prevails. The most usual combinations are: 1) GPH and repression+characterological traits, 2) A2 and defense in accordance with the goal, 3) A1 and disavowal, 4) O2 and disavowal, 5) O1 and disavowal, 6) IL and foreclosure of the affect. The difference among them can be found in the state of the defense and the relative magnitude of each fragment of the Ego. Between the narrations, failed disavowal and foreclosure of the affect prevailed

over successful defense in accordance with the goal. Among the enacted scenes, successful defense in accordance with the goal increasingly prevailed over successful disavowal and foreclosure of the affect. Successful state of disavowal and/or foreclosure of the affect indicates a major resistance against psychotherapy than the failed state of the same defenses. In consequence, Mostly in the first session the patient presented a certain opposition to the treatment. The seductive attitude of the patient during the first and second sessions coincided with the narration she did on her relationship with the psychologist of the institution. The resistances against the treatment diminished along the three sessions in favor of a more collaborative attitude, revealed by her tendency to give useful narrations combined with the description of the corresponding affects.

Each combination drive-defense enters in different alliances, subordinations and conflicts with other ones. For example, GPH and repression+seductive characterologic traits appears mostly at the service of O1 and disavowal (to remain in a world of fantasies without contact with the reality), and A1 and disavowal (discussions with the authorities, in the narrations, or insults and accusations, in the enacted scenes) are subordinated to the tendency to the discharge (IL and successful foreclosure of the affect). But IL might also be combined with successful defense in accordance with the goal, and the same thing occurred with O2, that sometimes combined with disavowal (reproaches) and sometimes with the defense in accordance with the goal (description of her affects). In the same way, IL and O2 and the defense in accordance with the goal were subordinated to A2 and the same defense. Besides, O1 and disavowal had sometimes a successful state (in narrations, on the tendency to include the psychologist in her own world of fantasies) and sometimes a failed state (when the patient referred to her own somatic state or her mother's organic problems). Also it has a mixed state (successful and failed) when she remained locked in, into her family house.

These psychic currents had a transitory prevalence, both in the extra-transference and during the sessions. When the patient consulted, the defense in accordance with the goal had already a certain relevance, which was increased during the first three sessions.

The outcome of the analysis of the first three sessions reveals that the patient oscillated between 1) the seductive attitude at the service of the resistances intending to include the therapy into her fantasies disconnected from the reality (GPH and successful repression+seductive characterologic traits and O1 and successful disavowal) and 2) a more collaborative attitude (consisting on referring concrete conflictive situations, describing her affective states, etc.). A third complementary and important tendency having also a resistance value included 1) catharsis (IL and successful foreclosure of the affect), 2) lamentations (O2 and successful disavowal) and 3) insults and accusations (A1 and successful disavowal). They appeared when the patient needed to abandon her disconnection from the reality and preferred to remain locked in, into the family house (O1 and successful-failed disavowal, corresponding to the psychic withdrawal), suffered dis-oriented states (IL and failed foreclosure of the affect), and supposed she had been exposed to body intrusions (including sexual contacts) from an unfair and selfish person. In the first three sessions these resistance attitudes (catharsis, lamentations, insults) were connected with her narrations and not with some enacted episode in which the patient revealed being an object of the therapist intrusion, but it is possible to predict that an equivalent scene will be displayed in the transference space accompanying the advance of the therapy. When the patient consulted, this third tendency was the prevalent in her extra-transference episodes, but during the sessions the first two occupied the therapeutic scene, with the increasing prevalence of the second one.

Table II: Main psychic currents

Psychic current	Narrations and enacted episodes	Main drive, defense and state
1)	seductive attitude	GPH and successful repression+seductive characterologic traits
	including the therapy into her fantasies	O1 and successful disavowal (main)

	disconnected from the reality	
2)	referring concrete conflictive situations	A2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal (main)
	describing her affective states	O2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal
3)	catharsis	IL and successful foreclosure of the affect (main)
	lamentations	O2 and succesful disavowal
	insults and accusations	A1 and successful disavowal

The outcomes of the analysis of the three first sessions show that the patient had different psychic currents, some of them corresponding to a narcissistic characterologic organization and some others more beningn. But among the most pathologic sectors of the patient's Ego, the prevailing mechanisms were disavowal (having a successful or a successful-failed state) and foreclosure of the affect (having a successful or a failed state), and not foreclosure of reality and the ideal, which is the main defense in the psychotic psychic organization.

IV. New analysis: one year after

We have selected a session from one year later because of it's representative character. The selection of the session derived from an inter-judge agreement.

IV.1. Analysis of narrations

In that session the patient offered 18 narrations, 8 of which were referred to her child and adolescent conflicts that led to her recent problems, while the remaining 10 were focused in the present situation. Among them, 6 were centered in the relationship with her family and the 4 remaining, in her personal conflicts. In the narrations of child and adolescence episodes, among the

pathological mechanisms O2 or A1 and disavowal prevailed, combined with IL and foreclosure of the affect, while the functional mechanism consisted in A2 and the defense in accordance with the goal. The main defense was disavowal accompanying A1. In the narrations of the present relationship with her family, among the pathological mechanisms, A2 and repression+characterological traits, accompanied by IL and foreclosure of the affect and and by A1 and disavowal prevailed, while the functional mechanisms consisted in A2 and UPH and the defense in accordance with the goal. Repression+characterological traits and the defense in accordance with the goal predominated. In the narrations of personal problems, O2 and disavowal was the main mechanism, combined with UPH and the defense in accordance with the goal.

In consequence, disavowal turns out to be the dominant defense, combined with the defense in accordance with the goal and, in a minor schale, with repression+characterologic defenses and with foreclosure of the affect.

Among the wishes, IL, O2, A1, A2 and UPH prevail, with the predominance of O2 and UPH.

IV.2. Analysis of speech acts

What prevailed in the patient's speech acts were: 1) references to her affective states (O2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal), 2) complaints, wails and reproaches (O2 and successful disavowal), 3) expressions of wishes, exagerations and dramatizations (GPH and successful repression+characterologic traits), combined with 4) a way of thinking disconnected from the facts (O1 and successful disavowal), 5) self-interruptions (UPH and successful repression), 6) references to spatial locations (UPH and successful defense in accordance with the goal), and 7) narrations, objections, references to obligations, causal links (A2 and successful defense in accordance with the goal). The patient presented a conflict between 3 sectors: 1) the wails and reproaches (O2 and successful disavowal), 2) the expressions of wishes and dramatizations (GPH and successful repression+characterologic traits) combined with the detachment from reality (O1 and successful-failed disavowal) and 3) the narrations, causal links, etc., combined with descriptions of her own affective states. The three main sectors of her speech acts were

expressions of 1) O1 (combined with successful-failed disavowal, often with the complement of GPH and successful repression+characterologic traits), 2) O2 (sometimes combined with the defense in accordance with the goal and sometimes with the disavowal) and A2 (and the defense in accordance with the goal). UPH and the defense in accordance with the goal and UPH and the repression had a complementary value of one of the other three, mostly of O1 or O2 and disavowal. Among the two central pathogenic components (O1 and disavowal and O2 and disavowal), O1 was dominant and O2 was at the service of the other: the patient expressed her pain (O2) linked to the loss of relationships that had never existed and that she created in her mind as if they had occurred (O1). Sometimes a narration or a description of a concrete fact or of an affective state culminated in the expression of a wish that was combined with a disconnection from the reality, in a self-reproach or a wail. However, in the end of the hour the tendency to narrate (A2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal) prevailed as well as the tendency to refer to her own affective states (O2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal). In consequence, we found this combination of psychic currents in the level of displayed scenes:

Table III: Psychic currents in the enacted episodes

Psychic currents
O2 and the successful defense in accordance with the goal
O2 and successful disavowal
GPH and successful repression+characterologic traits combined with O1 and successful disavowal
UPH and successful repression
UPH and successful defense in accordance with the goal
A2 and successful defense in accordance with the goal

V. Comparison between the results of the analysis of scenes narrated and enacted during the session

It was possible to notice a variety of wishes in the level of analysis of narrations: IL, O2, A1, A2 and UPH. What prevailed among them were UPH and O2. This large number of wishes detected in the analysis of narrations partially differed from those inferred in the analysis of speech acts, in which we observe O1, O2, A2, UPH and GPH, among which A2 and O2 prevail. These wishes are sometimes accompanied by functional defenses and sometimes by pathogenic defenses. On the other hand, there is a contradiction between functional and pathogenic defenses, among which disavowal predominates.

VI. Comparison between the results of the initial sessions and one from one year later

Some of the psychic currents dominating in the initial sessions, mostly IL and foreclosure of the affect, stopped having the same validity, especially in the level of speech acts, while in the narrations they were reduced. Among these last ones, this defense had some validity only in the episodes referred to her adolescent conflicts and to the present situation with her family. The combination between A1 and disavowal also lost importance, and what became hegemonic were mostly a pathogenic defense (disavowal combined with O2) and a functional mechanism (defense in accordance with the goal, combined with A2 and with UPH). In the enacted episodes, IL and foreclosure of the affect did not appear, and the main conflict opposed O1 and O2 and disavowal and A2 and the defense in accordance with the goal.

VII. Conclusions

1. The large number of psychic currents in the patient, which was possible to detect in the beginning of the treatment, was restricted to a minor group of components that were polarized around the conflict between two of them, a pathogenic and a normal current.

2. As the more severe pathogenic defenses started to disappear and the importance of the functional mechanisms began to be increased, it is possible to infer that there was a positive clinical change in the patient, which involved her extra-transferential relationships as much as the intra-session links.
3. The method proves to be sensitive for the detection of the nuances of the clinical modifications throughout the treatment.