

PhD project

«No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin or his background or his religion»

«People must learn to hate and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite»

Nelson Mandela¹

1. Research focus:

(Introduction and explanation about my point of view)

The life in prisons as a place where study the violent behaviours. As a place in which apply the methods of the psychogenealogy and of the psychodrama and so, tempt to delineate an anthropology of evil.

I would like enter into the prison system and speak to inmates.

I think that through gaining knowledge of their experiences and the chance to work with them on their genealogical trees, we could reach interesting and maybe clarification about what we deem to be evil.

And this will be my field work.

The keys I will use to interpret this aspect of the anthropological evil are the studies and researches of Carl G. Jung, those data collected from the anthropology of the body and other research by Jacob Levi Moreno, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Anne Ancelin Schützenberger about psycho-genealogy.

2. Hypothesis

From the data collected in prison I will try to outline better the generic concept about evil in European culture.

Everything turn around matter. The human matter it is his body. Everything turn around our body.

Many things have been written about the body in anthropological research. We know that the body can incorporate experiences; it is able to remember through the unconscious. The same unconscious which bring in its self, to the psycho-genealogy perspective, the past experiences of the family.

The individual is a biological evolution and he is a psychological evolution as well of who came before him. In his body (in his cells?) preserve many experiences which come from his ancestors, which can influence his behaviour and his choices.

¹And if a person like Mandela can say this then I can believe it. Mandela suffered at the hands of evil yet at the same time was able to see the power of love. As anthropologist I start from here, from this thinking.

It would be important, then, to work on the family trees of the inmates and observe toward which changes can bring the psycho-genealogical perspective.

3. Current status of the research

There is no official data currently in anthropology to support this method of psycho-genealogy in field work, whereas it could be useful.

This is one of the important points that I'll try to develop in my research.

I have three themes I propose to combine, which need to be read together, one in light of the other; they could make clear what we conceive to be evil. And this has not been done yet in anthropology.

The three themes that I'll try to confront are:

- The body and its importance
- The hypothesis about unconscious
- The utility about the psycho-genealogical perspective in anthropology

3.1. Anthropology of the Body

The anthropology of the body is to understand what the body is. To understand the anthropology of the body we have to first understand the material through which we exist.

The body is the instrument for existing. In a note encountered in the book of Pizza, *Medical Anthropology. Knowledge, practices and policies of the body*, Levi-Strauss says that «no, the man is the product of his body, but vice versa, has been able to do anything, anywhere of your body a product of his techniques and his representations»².

We perceive through the body, are one body, and perceive the world around us through the body, our «experience and our knowledge are incorporated»³, even more clearly, «is the body that knows the world»⁴.

The body is the concrete space in which to live and represents us, the part of the human that can be manipulated: to express the wide range of emotions (the ritual *naven* by Bateson mentions⁵), to establish the transition to the condition of man (the transformative rite of the *imbalu* at Gisu⁶), or the transition from the state

²Cfr. Giovanni Pizza, pag 253, note n. 2 to the chapter I "Figure del corpo" (trad it. *Antropologia medica. Saperi, pratiche e politiche del corpo*).

³*Ibidem*, pag. 29

⁴*Ibidem*.

⁵It is performed among the Iatmul of the New Guinea at the moment in which a teenager achieve an important aim, which mark the transit from teenager to adult. It is a camouflage rite which suspend the normal bodily habitus of men and women to permit unusual expression of feelings. The camouflage consist in a roles's exchange and in an exaggerstion of the opposite sex behaviour.

⁶Gisu are a popolation which live to the slopes of the El-gon's mountain, between Uganda and Kenya. The rite has been studied by Suzette Heald. It is consist in a real transformation. It is a circumcision, which during three days. The young person will be make dirty with sostances that regard important processes of transformation. The guy is considerated a fluid sostance like mud and he has to be transformed in new human status.

of nature to that of humans (at Caduveo of Brazil that they paint their face to be recognized as a human and not mere animals). Or interpreted as a symbol of alliance in the eucharist or the resurrection at easter (in both is the central body of Jesus). These are all expressions of the importance of the body.

Also, we have to take into account the behaviours and performance of the body: the simple fact of walking, to make war, love, give birth, sleep, laugh, crouch and Mauss brings many other examples. All of the above shows everyone how the body will serve to communicate who we are and what we want. These are examples of how the body is at the centre of our lives.

In short, in the words of Marcel Mauss the body is the first and most natural instrument of man. A tool that naturalizes cultural practices.

To *techniques du corps* Mauss meant exactly this: the body's ability to naturalize through observation and imitation of the gestures within its own cultural context. By imitating and "stealing with the eyes" the behaviours of others, we learn to move and occupy our social space. It is as if the body was able to absorb the knowledge with "pores of the skin" says Pizza. It is an evocative image that makes this idea.

Two anthropologists who have studied the body a lot, that is, Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, talking about *mind-full body*, a "body full of mind"; a thinking body, able to remember the past. A heavy past, critical and negative? Could be difficult to live with it.

So I would like to address the issue of incorporation and show that each individual carries in his body a long history (especially histories-family) to which it is bound. More of this story is unknown to us, and less we are free.

What "baggage" does a prisoner carry?

Very often those who precede us in the family tree can leave in us a "trans-generational phantom" that leads us to repeat actions which are yet to be resolved.

Previous lives that we have penetrated inside and "trans-generational phantom" that we have incorporated can perhaps help us understand evil anthropological in general and who commit evil actions in particular?

3.2. Psychogenealogy

Psycho-genealogy invites us to observe the human world as a generation *system*. A system, like everything in nature. Nature express itself through systems.

Each of us is the summary of a huge family tree inevitably embedded in culture and history.

Antonio Bertoli⁷ say that each of us is a «complex net of networks in interrelationship with each other». Are the summary 1) of our species, which makes it a biotype, that is, bipedal mammals; 2) the summary of our culture, which makes it an anthrop-type, that is, a Maori rather than an Iranian, or a Malagasy rather than a Zulu, a Wichí rather than an Italian; 3) the summary of his family, which makes it a genotype and in the same time a phenotype, that is, the depositary of the genetic heritage.

⁷Cfr. *Psico-bio-genealogia*.

All of the above has an influence on our psychology and on our lives, that is, on our biography. Obviously, who we are does not determinate from all of the above, but depend from all of the above. To psycho-genealogic experience we are a biological and psychological evolution of who came before us.

Psycho-genealogy is an anthropological perspective as well not only extremely interesting, but very precious, because it helps us understand “human nature”⁸ and also to make clear around our theme of evil and its nature.

In this psychological perspective the genealogic tree is precious, because it can explain our emotional background.

Anne Ancelin Schützenberger said «any system depends on its ecosystem»⁹. So, every person born and grow up within a family environment in which will share joys and sorrows. Willy-nilly if in the history of our family there are imbalances, negativity, that is, painful events, we will inherit, as well as we inherit the genetic heritage.

Each of us has behind its self dozens of people in his family tree, which interlace other family trees.

It is easier than in a family intersect dozens of names and it is just as easy to get to two centuries of history and have grandparents or great-grandparents who participated in important historical events, war dead, imprisoned, with difficult experienced and much more.

Genocides, wars, incarcerations, but also deadly diseases, suicides and any other event not yet processed but buried in the unconscious. All of above, in the trans-generational perspective, ends up in our bodies, in us.

So it becomes very clear at this point why the body is our history and why it has a history.

I make use of psychological genealogy, by virtue of that anthropological consciousness, from which it is clear that the body is the place where thought and life are interlace in a complex bond.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes shows how the disease is an "embodied rebellion"¹⁰, while Michael Taussig says that «it is as if the “nervous system” became a metaphor built the "socio-political system”»¹¹. I believe, therefore, have the right to be influenced by this research and these anthropologists, as well as by research and observations which Schützenberger did in twenty years of psychotherapy.

Trans-generational psychology has behind it important contributions: insights, observations, experiences, social experiments which start even from Freud. His studies on dreams, the personal unconscious, the "collective psyche", the concept of the “uncanny” they have been retaken, reinterpreted, reworked; they have inspired, influenced, led to new considerations and new interpretations psychologists and therapists as Schützenberger.

The study’s Jung on archetypes, the collective unconscious and synchronicity. The experience gained in the psychodrama by Jacob L. Moreno¹², who has worked in prisons and in a community of deviant women; with

⁸Exist a “human nature”? it is a difficult one, anyway who write is persuade that it exist. It is just a intellectual proposal which could be useful, at moment, because we have no proofs about it

⁹Cfr. A. A. Schützenberger, *The ancestors syndrome*, pag 118

¹⁰Studies conducts in the north-est of Brasil, to the slopes of Alto do Cruzeiro.

¹¹Cfr. Giovanni Pizza, *op. cit.*, pag 44

¹²Psychologist and father of the psycho-drama method.

alcoholics and couples in crisis managing to positively transform the lives of these people (he has also developed the method of sociometry). The "invisible family loyalty" by Hungarian psychotherapist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and the concept of "family justice", "family accounts" and "parentsation".

Other significant contributions are also those by Nicholas Abraham and Maria Török¹³ on the concept of "crypt" and "phantom", unconscious figures to explain the repetition of traumatic events, painful or simply stressful. Working on subjects who had acted without knowing why, as if "they had another" the two scholars represented the phenomenon talking about a "phantom" who acted in those people as a "ventriloquist", or as in the case of a possession.

Decisive has been the searches by Josephine Hilgard¹⁴, landed the discovery of the "anniversary syndrome", after a study about the children of the families deported from the concentration camps and extermination or interned in asylums.

These studies, in the psychological field, just confirm and deepen the ideas and anthropological reflections about habitus, incorporation and inseparability between the mind and the body. This is the idea which I have done about the contribution by psycho-genealogy.

It is in this perspective that the holistic approach of the "primary archetypes" by Antonio Bertoli and the "psychomagic" by Jodorowsky are grafted, providing an interesting contribution made of concrete experiences.

3.3. Depth psychology and Jungian unconscious

The question of what should be the level of consciousness that takes in account an anthropologist is a matter that is placed in front of each researcher.

I believe that the lives of men and women will continue in the night's sleep, in dreams, in which pitted the unconscious contents: memories, fears, desires, expectations, impulses, aspirations and parts of the personality that in waking and solar life cannot emerge - because of social issues organized in permits and prohibitions - and this is, by now, an acquired from psychology and neurology.

So, for me the unconscious level of life is, like the conscious's one, real. Neurological studies have widely understood that the brain does not distinguish between dream and waking. For the unconscious does not rest, everything is life. Reality! And we really think that this inner part of us, even if it is silent and invisible to the conscience, do not finish among the artist's fingers, or in the hands of the murderer? In the gestures and glances, politics, economics, religion and at all levels where we organize the society?

The psycho-analysis of Jung is an analysis of the deepness within the human animal. About which myths, symbols and dreams seem to indicate as the source of the culture.

¹³Ungarien psychologist

¹⁴US psychologist

All his therapeutic work is in fact tended to reconstruct and integrate the parts of the personality: of the light and of the shadow, of the good and of the bad, of the goodness and of the evil which are in us, through the reading of dreams, the interpretation of synchronisms, the religious symbols, the management of transference.

To understand the meaning of evil, we have to understand what it means this path toward the Self, this research toward the completeness of the Self, but to understand the Self we have to talk about the hypothesis of archetypes, that is, about the image of the syzygy and shadow linked to Christian symbolism as well. Authentic unconscious powers, real «divinity as the antiquity had very rightly conceived»¹⁵.

The “evil” is always a person which would be understood in its entirety before judging; a man, a woman in which, often, the completeness of the Self has not occurred and its projections have had precedence over reality.

4. Methodology:

I would mainly conduct myself of in-depth interviews, but if the circumstances require it, I could avail myself for structured interviews (if the subject is too evasive, elusive and the interviews are likely to become extremely long, etc.) as well.

I'm going to start a real journey of study about family trees – with those subjects that permit it – and which will see them engaged in a search about their family past that then we will process it together.

In this regard I would like to avail myself of a geno-socio-gram which will serve to establish the closeness that the subject has or feels towards the various family members. This tool will help me to draw a map of the family constellation per each individual and try to make clear about my topic.

5. Timing:

First year, first semester: finding bibliographic date or research on prisons and the life within them. Make contact with the prisons that I'll select (this one will be agreed at the start of my research, if it ever will).

First year, second semester: choice and management of the bureaucracy (permits to enter prisons and so on) of the prison selected for research.

Second year: ethnographic activities and work on the reconstruction of family trees

Third year: processing of the obtained data and the presentation of the final thesis

6. Feasibility of the project:

In all honesty, my intention – an ethnography in prisons - is an entirely new work for me and I do not know, to date, how to assess the difficulty of the undertaking. I think, intuitively, that the feasibility of my research is difficult (both the bureaucratic regarding permission to enter the prison and the ethnography in itself).

My only contacts are with Dr. Cristina Oddone (author of the documentary-film *They inside*), a sociologist at the University of Genova (Italy), which has an experience of several years with the world of prisons. And with

¹⁵Cfr. Carl G. Jung, *Aion. Researches on the symbolism's self.*, pag 21

Antonio Bertoli expert about psycho-genealogy and co-author about some work with Alejandro Jodorowsky as *Alle origini della malattia*.

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