



Therapy and Crisis in Greece: A Different Approach

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Let me also start with Ernest Hemingway: “For all the poor of the world against tyranny”, from his work “For Whom the Bell Tolls”. This great, radical, American litterateur, offensive criticizer of the establishment and its politics, praiser of the democratic army in the Spanish Civil War, who ended his life himself as his father and two brothers had done, in a sense of persecution by the FBI. And let me make some brief remarks concerning the article...

First: It seems to be a great ordeal, the relationship of a family therapist with politics. It is not allowed for him to submit his clinical work to his political choices. On the other hand, it is not possible to seal the shutters hermetically at the entrance of politics in the therapeutic room- the members of a family bring politics in the midst of their anguishes and longings, along with their pathologies. And it is not forbidden for the therapist to come to his own political conclusions from the family problems, to strengthen or to change or, mainly, to elaborate, work-through further his political opinions, and also to communicate them publicly. Let us remember how Freud, after the First World War, declared that the “war neurosis” should be countered by free psychoanalysis for all the people from the public sector.

Second: I think that Vlassis Tomaras, one of the mainstays of systemic family therapy in Greece, apparently without any expediency, with this article falls into the first category of the incorporation of therapy into political selections. However, it is one



thing the projection of particular ex- ante-political views of the therapist and the integration of them in therapeutic practices, and another thing the elaboration of therapeutic experiences and the conclusion, on the base of statistical elements and political considerations, specifically for the consequences of the hard, ten-year, Greek economical crisis in the function of a family. It is possible that a mother says to the therapist, “due to the crisis my son is set to work”, but our experience in the Family Therapy Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital of Athens, from thousands of families that we have seen those last years, is that the absence of employment for the children, the unemployment of the father, of the mother, of both of them, the inadequate income and the lack of perspective are the main factors of the extensive pathologies in Greek families.

Third: Vlassis Tomaras et al., describe Greece as divided into two camps, the “against” and the “in favour” of memorandums. The latter, though in the minority in their opinion, has the right to gain the laurel crown of the “systemic view” as it has an excellent analytical ability, something which is lacking in the former. All arise from the “crisis” and through a systemic sequence lead to social deprivation caused by the fact that the “memorandums ... could not (or it was not desirable) to be applied”, meaning that all is due to Greek incompetence or reluctance. Of course systemic approach does not have the monopoly on psychotherapy, nor did psychotherapy start from a systemic approach. One of the founders of systemic psychotherapy, Gregory Bateson, started from social anthropology and used systemic thinking and practice in pioneering and profound political analyzes, as the birth of Nazism in Germany. But that does not mean that we can play, imposing any (so-called) systemic process on political phenomena, neither can we ignore or hush-up on processes and studies that have been elaborated by specialists on the issues of the economic crisis. I do not have the ability or ambition, to suggest another systemic vision to the one of Vlassis Tomaras. et al, but I can, for example, study two American economists, Nobel Prize winners, Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz. The systemic malfunction, they point out, is exactly the opposite of what V.T.’s et al article says: The International Financial Capital speculates → mortgage loans crisis in US → intensity of the crisis in Europe → epicenter of the crisis in Greece → impose by Europe stifling politics to Greece, totally opposed to usual anti-recession policies → Greek Destruction. The main



responsibility, according to them, does not burden the Greek people, but the European.

Fourth: V.T. et al. in their article refer to the mourning of the Greek families due to the crisis, which is correct. They refer to dysfunctional motives of mourning, as denial, idealization of the deceased, hiding of the secret, keeping the dead as alive, incrimination of others, which is also quite right. On the other hand, it is an extreme failure, in my opinion, and extremely dangerous to highlight these elements as the core of the family malfunction. It is as if the therapist welcomes the couple where each member is slaughtering the other, the adolescent who is derailed, the family in disintegration proclaiming prosecutor charges: “You are those who are guilty!”, leading them to an identification with the aggressor: “Thanks to the crisis our son is set to work and the house has become calm”.

In my opinion, the role of the family therapist is totally different. It is to help them distinguish external adversities, so that they can bravely face the mourning for all that has been lost, get out of the trap of envy, distinguish the real enemy, recover self-respect and respect for each other, self-esteem and militancy.

And I will close with Hemingway and democratic Spain of the civil war, where he wonders constantly, “For what are we born if not to aid one another?”

Self-inculpation, redemption and solidarity are worthy for the therapist to inculcate upon the families of the great crisis.

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