

Simon, Lehel – Szilágyi, Levente – Csetverikov, Anna:

Complex psychotherapeutical and biopsychological approaches to autism and autistic disorders

It is common to address autistic disorder as “pervasive” or “comprehensive” ontogenetic disorders because they affect all areas of adolescent psychological development negatively. But as the expression itself suggests the truth is that we are not directly aware of the specific disorders. As it will turn out we cannot deal with autism as a complex disorder, we should rather use the term in plural i.e. autisms and autistic disorders.^{1 2}

In my lecture I would like to point out the Asperger syndrome, because this autistic personality disorder has a so-called “acting out” between the process of “subject superior”, (in Whiteheadian philosophy it’s the “superject”³) and that of the “subject interior” which means the personality’s reality in the human psychological integrity. The superject dominates the person who has a schisis between its social and the own personal integrity. The individual psychological processes are under the superior reality. But the superior reality is the patient’s stronger psychoentity above the own personality. Reality versus psychological continuity – psychodynamic process contra social reality – metaphysical supremacy contra psychical process of the emotional interiorization: “out” inside of the own personality, but not “out” from personality. “Psychopathy, not psychosis” - as was said by Hans Asperger immigrant Austrian psychiatrist and pediatrician. But we haven’t really got a psychoanalytical model for this syndrome, so we cannot make analytical therapy for an analytical intellectual disorder form.

The Asperger syndrome (AS) has been in use as a diagnostic criterion since 1944; it was called then “Autistic psychopathy”. It only got the name Asperger syndrome referring to the first diagnostician from Lorna Wing psychologist and from her psychoanalyst colleagues

¹ See: NELSON: Nelson textbook of pediatrics / editor, Richard E. Behrman; Robert M. Kliegman, Valdo E. Nelson, Victor C. Vaughan, Harcourt Brace & Company, Philadelphia, 2002. (First Hungarian Edition, 1995. Budapest, Melánia Kiadó; pp.72-73.)

² See: The Merck Manual – Diagnosis and Therapy (MSD ORVOSI KÉZIKÖNYV Diagnózis és terápia) ; Editor in Chief: Robert Berkow, M.D (Melánia Kiadó, Budapest 1994.) ; pp. 2267-2268.

³ Alfred North Whitehead, "Process and Reality (Corrected Edition)"

Free Press | ISBN 0029345804 | Corrected Edition | 1978 | DJVU | 398 pages |Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh during the session 1927-28.

Corrected Edition edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne.; pp.50-120.

in 1981. After all it was only involved in the official system of DSM-IV ^{4 5} as a unique syndrome in 1994 and it is still much debated etiologically and from other aspects.

It is interesting and its importance will be emphasized later that the male versus female occurrence rate is 6:1⁶, and it does not show symptoms in early childhood while other autisms do so. Its real occurrence is frequently met after the age of six. Even today it is considered by clinical child psychologists as a child psychopathy and no etiologic relation is seen between psychotic and neurodegenerative autisms. The fact that the IQ of children with AS is usually outstandingly high – often exceeds the value 140 – provides further support of this idea. We are going to point out that the classification spread in the '90s was totally wrong by saying that this is a mild form of autisms^{7 8} as opposed to the seriously retarded Kanner's syndrome which was considered as a severe form of autism in this old classification. After 1994 we cannot even talk about such a division.

⁴ See: DSM-IV. TEXTREVISION (Animula Kiadó, Budapest, 1999.) ; pp. 41-69.

⁵ See: DSM idem

⁶ Wing, L. (1981) Sex ratios in early childhood autism and related conditions. Psychiatry Research, 5, pp. 129-137.

⁷ See: DSM idem

⁸ See: NELSON idem

Psychological models:

It is much debated whether it exclusively hits boys. There are many arguments which say that we tend to pay more attention to boy gender samples⁹, especially when they show extreme intellectual capacity. Though the above mentioned prevalence rate is generally accepted: it is unquestionable as for the contemporary statistical data. Its frequency is 2/10000 (though as we know the prevalence of every autistic clinical aspect has dramatically grown in the last 20 years these are also official data from 1995 further on)¹⁰.

If we take a look at the latest psychological function theory of AS (Baron-Cohen EQ – SQ theory)¹¹ the male –female rate proves even more to be right, functionally too. This is because besides the extremely low EQ and extremely high IQ and SQ AS strengthens the convergent comprehensive function so it results in a high organizational intelligence and in a lower emotional intelligence adversely. So the convergent male-hemisphere function is extremely dominant and the divergent feminine functions are not only incapable of communication with the convergent functions, but they are behind¹².

If we look at the model described above from the aspect of psychodynamics including emotionality, it seems to be easy to establish a psychoactive model for a psychopathic scission between the systematic and unsystematic cognitive, emotional and personality-structure-functions. This gives a good example for the more and more accepted model which says that children with AS are likely to become adolescents or adults with borderline personality disorder.^{13 14} We do not yet hold credible statistical data about this, but more and more psychodynamic systems state that there is successive relation between childhood psychopathy with AS and adulthood psychopathic pathographies especially borderline syndrome.¹⁵ It would be a mistake though to apply the so called “minified adult model”; AS is a unique pathography of psychopathy.¹⁶

⁹ Source: http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk/infosheets/ta_girls.pdf
The Pattern of Abilities and Development of Girls with Asperger's Syndrome, Sept. 1999

¹⁰ See: NELSON idem

¹¹ SEE : This paper appeared in Tager Flusberg, H, (ed) Neurodevelopmental Disorders MIT Press, 1999. The extreme-male-brain theory of autism ; Simon Baron-Cohen ; Departments of Experimental Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Cambridge

¹² SEE idem.

¹³ SEE: [Infant pain management: a developmental neurobiological approach](#). Fitzgerald M, Walker SM. Nat Clin Pract Neurol. 2009 Jan;5(1):35-50. PMID: 19129789 [PubMed - in process]

¹⁴ SEE: Otto F. Kernberg: Borderline szindróma és patológiás narcizmus (Az Autizmus Alapítvány KAPOCS Kiadója, Budapest, 1990.) (Otto F. Kernberg M.D. Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, Jason Aronson Inc. New York, 1957.) ; pp.7-47.

¹⁵ SEE idem.

¹⁶ SEE: DSM idem.

Our psychoanalytic therapeutical possibility:

This is the sort of diagnostics having numerous psychoanalytic moments and the possibility of a complex Ferenczian approach be built on it. The disorder does have a psychoanalytic history too, but its psychoanalytic approach in terms of therapy is a real scientific vacuum.

Since the making of the Baron-Cohen theory¹⁷ (1991) AS is considered as a ‘male brain disorder’ thus an excessive male hemisphere function (the boy : girl rate is 6:1). In a quite curious way the SQ and the IQ is often extremely high with people suffering the syndrome while their EQ is somewhat lower or very low (AS is also measured by SQ-EQ relative tests¹⁸.) It is also known that convergent functions extremely dominate divergent functions. Our psychoanalytic hypothesis puts up the question of whether the convergence can be described in this case as a rational ego – self ideal – superego function (we must not forget that the disorder is the most intensive between ages 6 and 10 with boys thus in the latency period and it debuts in the age of six, sic!) and describe the lack of divergence by that “Thalassa – function”¹⁹ from which the “good boy” idealization segregates children?

¹⁷ The autistic child's theory of mind: A case of specific developmental delay.
Baron-Cohen, Simon
Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. Vol 30(2), Mar 1989, 285-297.

¹⁸ See ibid

¹⁹ Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality, Publisher : Karnac Books ; pp. 25-36.

Published : 1989 ISBN 10 : 9780946439614

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The Ferenczy –Freud dialog about the possibility of a mutual therapy in their own dialect may create the psychoanalytic therapy methods of Asperger autism. The psychodynamic aspect can be up-to-date here in the 21st century too.

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