Listening to the Lived Experience

Tomasella S*

Founder of CERP, Psychoanalyst, France

*Corresponding author: Saverio Tomasella, Founder and Manager, CERP, Psychoanalyst, France, E-mail: saveriotomasella@gmail.com

Received date: June 08, 2019; Accepted date: June 10, 2019; Published date: June 17, 2019

Citation: Tomasella S (2019) Listening to the lived experience. Trauma Acute Care Vol.4 No.1: 2.

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Editorial

The most decisive clinical and theoretical developments about psychological traumas have emerged for many psychoanalysts from their observations and their awareness during and after armed conflicts. Taking these observations into account, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists’ reflection on trauma has been enriched by other conceptions and other approaches, including philosophical ones. This is particularly the case with research in phenomenology.

For Louis Crocq, military psychiatrist, “The trauma corresponds to an unexpected confrontation with the real of death. Brutally, collapses the world of culture with which the subject lived until then. He finds himself in a world of raw sensations that no longer make sense to him. These sensations overwhelm him”. Crocq insists that the trauma corresponds to both the violence suffered and the violence given. The guilt of violence against others is very heavy, even when it is officially justified by war. This guilt often arises when the crossing of the eyes of the enemy, generating a terrible fascination (1).

It is important also to distinguish between the psychic phenomena that take place at the time of the accident and those that occur immediately afterwards. At the moment of shock, the denial of the unbearable reality creates a hole, a void, a blank. In the place of pain, appalling and indefinable, from the loss of one’s place in their human community, and even from the disappearance of all forms of social bond, from the loss of one’s place in their human community, and even from the disappearance of all forms of otherness, which can then cause the entry into madness.

Beyond the cleavage lies also the radical defense by dissociation, as Ferenczi, after Charcot, has highlighted: disarrange with the bruised body and with the traumatic reality. The moment of the traumatic break-in corresponds to a face-to-face encounter with a dissociative psychotic symptomatology responding to the fear and threat of annihilation. Sometimes referred to as traumatic psychosis, it can result from a transitory autistic state with a defensive value (3).

After the shock, the trauma reveals its effect of destruction, the subject feels congested with a “foreign body”: his affects are blocked. The trauma leaves a “black hole”, a gap in the continuity of the subject’s existence, a void of memory (1). Trauma alters representations of oneself, the world, and the other. Moreover, for Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière, the trauma results from the rupture of the social bond, from the loss of one’s place in their human community, and even from the disappearance of all forms of otherness, which can then cause the entry into madness.

“In the absence of a person to talk to, the trauma reduces the subject to an inner world invaded by fear and anguish of annihilation. It is doomed to loneliness, an absolute dereliction, a break with all community and cultural links. There is nothing in contemporary culture that can help reintegrate the victim into the world of the living. Death has no representation. Except sometimes through another horrified.” (4)

History will continue to produce “other horrified” massively; not only because of the many armed conflicts that occur, but also through serious disasters whose devastating range is beyond measure.

References
