

16. avoiding the trap: when more is not necessarily the better.

In the daily praxis of care-work, one risks to fall into the trap of security. It is a double-faced trap: on one side, universal judgement, and on the other, the universality of judgement.

To avoid the trap, one can leave the need for the absolute to the necessity of the narcissism, and enter the mysterious universe of significant instead.

The evolution didn't end up with Einstein, as physics continues to evolve with quantum and particle theories, which gifted us with other vivid examples. One of those regards the concept of energy.

When energy is applied to the electrons, they speed up.

The general common sense would suggest that the more energy is added, the higher results will be reached (in term of speed). I have worked with groups that assumed this as their existing paradigm.

They were unaware of the fact that their assumption was real only within the framework of general common sense: it tells something about being general and common, but it risks a rubber wall in term of signification, senses, praxis and net results.

What happens in reality is that as much energy we provide to electrons, their speed won't increase for ever till the speed of light, as if something was curbing and repressing. The closer to the speed of light, the more energy is required to go faster. In simple words, the closer, the heavier. The more energy we offer, the less speed will grow, progressively diminishing its progression. Again, a sensitive metaphor for transference and counter-transference dynamics. And a suggestive image to represent what the care-workers still use to define “the resistance of individuals to succeed their programmes”.

It happens because the energy offered to speed up the electron

transforms their mass and makes their movements more difficult.

Expanding the mass⁴³ is an effect of the energy spent for increasing the speed. But the speed of light can't be reached, as it would need an infinite energy⁴⁴. Similarly, nothing can expand and increase for ever. Not the speed of an electron. Not economy. Not a virus. And without adding a moral or ethic value, not even lemmings⁴⁵. An inconvenient truth at the base of the universe.

This effect sounds like what happens with the paradigm of reinsertion policies: if we apply energy to the individuals-in-need, they will be reinserted de facto. If the institution pushes the person-in-need in their programmes, the reinsertion is the expected result. But just as for the ambit of speed of light, also this scope can not be reached just by adding and/or pushing.

It sounds as a self-centred paradigm, son of the über alles attitude, whose effect seems closer to the implicit attempt of confirming a liberal perspective of an ever-growing market.

Nothing can grow forever being self-controlling at same time. Except for mania. And megalomania⁴⁶.

Mania is defined as a state of abnormal level affecting mood, arousal

⁴³ For the fan of physics, the formula for the correlation between the measures of the mass in two different inertial systems is: $m''' = \gamma(m - vp/c^2)$; while the formula for the quantity of motion is: $p' = p + v((\gamma - 1)vp/c^2 - m\gamma)$

⁴⁴ the mass tends to infinity the closer it gets to the speed of light

⁴⁵ Lemmings are small rodents living near the Arctic in tundra biomes; they became the subject of a popular misconception that they commit mass suicide during migration: it is not a mass suicide, but the result of their migratory behaviour. Driven by strong biological urges, when population density becomes too great, lemmings migrate in large groups. In such cases, many may drown if the body of water is so wide as to stretch their physical capability to the limit.

⁴⁶ Megalomania is the old-fashioned version of what *DSM IV* calls the Narcissistic Personality Disorder, defined as “an all pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour)”. It is considered a disorder “characterised by an inflated sense of self-esteem and overestimation by persons of their power and belief” (Weiner, Craighead, *The Corsini Encyclopedia of psychology*, Vol. III, 2010).

and energy, opposite to depression.

It is considered a “mood” disorder, where individuals experience manic episodes (from milder or hypo-mania to psychosis) alternates with depression.

An English synonymous of mania is “delusions of grandeur”, while in French is “folie de grandeur”, both implicitly focusing on the insanity of the structure more than on the temporal symptoms.

The structure is far more significant than the symptoms.

The mania is typical of the “up” phase of the bipolar disorder which implies the delusion and the “down” depressive phase.

Picturing our structural economical paradigm as a bipolar disorder is not too soothingly.

Furthermore, offering a prospective of care based on a bipolar structure sounds quite risky to the individuals we work with.

The neo-liberal policies state that the possibility of social inclusion and reinsertion depends on “opportunity-packs” that are pushed in as the increment of energy to shove the electron speed. But reality checks tell a different story. So does the theory of relativity.

On top of that, austerity and liberal policies tend to forget to take into account the fact that what the services and institutions call the point of reinsertion, is often the closer step to the breaking point for the individuals in need.

If we add the fact that the resources for the “opportunity packs” are diminishing for the general dwindling in welfare as result of the austerity measures, the circle gets tuff.