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Intercultural-Holistic Education in Symbolic-Anthropological Dance Mediation

Alba G.A. Naccari*

Abstract

The paper is about the method of Symbolic-Anthropological Expressive Mediation, which comes mainly from the research, training and supervision carried out in Eurinome, the School of Bodily and Expressive Mediation Pedagogy of Perugia (Italy).

The specific methodology is set up as an educational re-working of methodologies, born in the dance-movement-therapy clinical field that enhances the symbolic and intercultural dimension of dancing and movement.

The characteristic element of the method is the holistic approach. Bodily and expressive mediation is designed and proposed as a privileged dimension to enable the various components of the person in all its complexity, in consideration of the plot of cultural and human interactions in which he/she lives.

Keywords: *intercultural education; holistic education; dance-movement-therapy; symbolic-anthropological methodology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

By this paper, I intend to present some of the elements that characterize the theory and methodology of the *symbolic-anthropological expressive mediation*, highlighting in particular the pedagogical potential of symbolic mediation. Both the theoretical and the practical dimensions of the specific method proposed prove deeply intercultural: the theory integrates philosophical, psychological and spiritual approaches of different geographical and historical contexts, searching within them that which unites in light of the broadest and most inclusive interpretation of human beings. The practice of the use of the symbol in expressive and dance mediation reveals obvious opportunities for intercultural opening and understanding thanks to the universality of the symbolic image itself. Thanks to bodily and expressive mediation, to which the spoken word is integrated with methods that increase the value of the creative processes, knowledge, from *sophia*, wisdom, becomes *phronesis*, wisdom of life.

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2. SYMBOLIC-ANTHROPOLOGICAL DANCE-MOVEMENT EDUCATION: FROM THERAPY TO PEDAGOGY

The method comes from my personal path of training and research, which was divided over the years into different disciplinary fields, and by the work of education, research, training and supervision carried out in the *School of Bodily and Expressive Mediation Pedagogy, Eurinome*, of Perugia (See www.danzasimbolica.altervista.org), which has been in operation since 2009. All of this is also thanks to the exchange, sharing and researches carried out with colleagues both within the context of dance-movement-therapy and bodily mediation in different university contexts (see Naccari, 2004, 2006, 2012, 2018, 2019).

The specific methodology is configured as a reworking and integration, in a pedagogical key, of theories and methodologies mainly conceived in the clinical field of dance-movement-therapy, methodologies that enhance the symbolic dimension of dance and movement. The new approach is thus established both as an explicit educational possibility in context and agencies proposed for pedagogical purposes, and as an educational integration within the clinical practice. Also in clinical theory and practice, illness is now no longer considered only in reference to purely biological data, it is increasingly trying to consider the complexity of the affective, personal and social system of the person in need of care, a system that affects the status of health or illness, influencing the meaning that is attributed to the symptom and the way of accepting and reacting to the illness itself. In many medical systems (for example psychosomatics), symptoms are a language that refers to the whole person. In addition, the concept of well-being refers not only to the absence of illness but also to the subjective perception of “one’s own state of satisfaction and of psychophysical balance” (Benetton, 2012: 23). For the World Health Organization, well-being involves all the dimensions of a person, therefore not only the body, but also the affective, social and spiritual reality. Therefore, the well-being, and/or the *being well*, is inevitably intertwined with pedagogical matters because it affects the various *growths* (corporeal, affective, social, intellectual, ethical, spiritual ...) of people, and the capacity they have to take care of themselves, of self-realization and personal development (see Dahlke, 2007).

In this sense the meaning of therapy increasingly approaches the original etymology of the term. In fact, *therapeuein* means taking care of the person in the broadest sense; therefore also educating those aspects that are seemingly distant from the “diseased part”, in consideration of the total humanity of the person in therapy. Aspects that are distinctly medical, therefore, should not be disjointed from those that are pedagogical. Among other aspects, illness inevitably requires a change and a capacity of acceptance and of condescension towards human frailties that could inevitably prove to be educational tasks.

In developing the pedagogical approach, I consider the educational opportunity essentially *teleological*, that is to say related to the ability to look and to orient towards the future, towards the actualization and the

development of talents that are still not particularly developed, towards ideals that are still underexplored, towards the possible evolution of the different components of the personality; in one word: towards empowerment of the person (see Rogers, 1978). In this, the approach differs from some *archaeological* approaches of therapeutic methods that are probably already outdated, that used mainly to dedicate attention to what happened in the past (see Ricoeur, 1999: 347-348). I believe that within the concept of *time* there should be regarded essentially a sort of dialectic circularity in the subjective conscience, in which the memory of the past and the expectation of the future, conceived in the present, influence each other. Designing one's own possible future can allow a different interpretation of one's past, and every time something happens in the present, the past is seen in a new light. Therefore, it is important to move away from the deterministic and linear logic in which the past radically influences what we can be; with Morin (but also with Saint Augustin and Ricoeur) I believe that in order to affirm the sense of freedom, of responsibility and of self-determination of the person, it is necessary to pass from a linear logic of time to one that is circular. In the symbolic-anthropological approach, the methods of working are usually *nutritive* in the sense that there is a tendency to offer from the outside through movement forms-symbols deemed psychotropic, i.e. positive for the personality of those involved. Through these images, it is possible to activate-learn new or little explored attitudes and possibilities of existence. Symbolic images are proposed through a specific setting in which activities are structured (by those who lead, or by traditional choreographies ...) and unstructured (open skills, theatre-dance and games-exercises, improvisation etc.) flow one into the other in relation to the same symbolic theme, chosen on the basis of educational needs of those participating in a particular group. In gestures used, the cultures of people of the world are enhanced through the appropriate and specific integration of ethnic dances and/or other expressive forms that include universal archetypal meanings: gestures that are culturally connoted, myths and narratives in general, graphic pictorial expressions...etc. Therefore, substantially the symbolic image, central to the setting of each session, is proposed for a specific holistic (and always, inevitably intercultural) education, as I will shortly describe in more detail.

3. FOR A HOLISTIC EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE

The theory and the methodology of the symbolic-anthropological approach enhance a holistic education, with all the nuances that this definition involves. Dance, bodily and expressive mediation in general are conceived, and, in fact, proposed as privileged dimensions to activate the various components of the person in his/her complexity, in the different life cycles (see Erikson, 1997; Levinson, 1978,1996) and in consideration of

the even more complex plot of interactions in which he/she is inserted. The complexity of the person is considered through an intercultural reading, in which philosophical, religious, and medical systems of all time and places, (from the neoplatonic philosophy to the theory of multiple intelligences of Gardner, see Naccari, 2006), find a peculiar convergence in the enhancement of the interdependence of the human being's different dimensions, and in their confluence in universal archetypes.

In the cultural worlds that have contributed to the weaving of the theoretical model of reference must be included the Jewish one, thanks to the philosophy of the dialogue of Martin Buber (1993) and the authoritative studies on the Jewish religion by Gershom Scholem (1980, 1986). The philosophy of the dialogue has allowed me to understand how the human interaction, as well as being crucial for the formation of the human being and for the care of civilization, is substantially a reality which entirely involves the whole person, and requires a kind of presence in which the spoken word only plays a small part. Becoming a person is thus configured as a *training of You*, in which the experience of relating with corporeal-emotional-imaginative-empathic-spiritual reality is continuously evolving and requires the ability to put oneself in the game and take risks, in order to meet the another in a special space (the *Zwischen*). A space in which understanding is also created by empathy, signs, gestures, and glances, in short, by that which is non-verbal.

In addition, the biblical Judaism, to which Scholem masterfully refers, does not know the dualism between body and soul even from a linguistic point of view. In fact, in Hebrew each term always refers to the human being's totality, emphasizing a different perspective. No term describes a part of the person as if it could be imaginarily detached from the rest. The word *Basar* cannot be translated with the word *body* but refers to a whole human being seen from the perspective of its earthly weakness. *Nefes* cannot be translated with *soul*, meant as the guest of the body; but it is instead the life of the body, which *animates* its emotions, feelings and desires. In relation to the interdependence of the complex realities that make up human beings, in the Book of Zohar, an interesting metaphor is proposed: *Nefes* is

intimately linked to the body and, having reached perfection, it becomes the throne on which it rests *Ruah* [...]. When both, namely soul and spirit, have reached perfection, then they can receive *Nesamah*, the “super-soul”, for which *Ruah* becomes a throne [...]. The soul, *Nefes*, is the inferior impulse that touches the physicality; as a candle where the lower dark light is in contact with the wick, on which its very existence depends. When the dark light has become well established on the wick – i.e. *Basar*, corporeality –, it becomes the seat for the white light, above. When both are well established, then it is the white light that becomes a seat, for that elusive, invisible and unknowable light, that rests on the white light. (Scholem, 1998: 18)¹

1 The quotes within the text are translated into English from the Italian version.

Therefore, between *body*, *soul*, *spirit* and *higher soul* there is a relationship of *systemic* interdependence, where one part separated from the other is not conceivable. From physicality to the *dark light*, to the *white light*, to that which is *invisible*, “the metaphor indicates a progressive mutual belonging, where the conquest of the most beautiful light presupposes an improvement and not the mortification of previous-lesser *thrones*; but here *lesser* does not have a negative meaning, but only chronological precedence in the order of concrete existence and of possible improvement” (Naccari, 2006: 20). The different dimensions of human beings are, therefore, in complex interaction and through one it is possible to influence the other; corporeality and movement are an unavoidable reality for all the others, through which it is therefore possible to educate all the others. The close interdependence between body and other human dimensions is also highlighted by a more recent research carried out in very different areas (see Casasanto, 2011, 2013)

The holistic approach not only refers to the totality of human beings in themselves but, in fact, also relates to the relational, cultural and natural context in which everyone is inevitably involved in a system of actions and responses (see Bronfenbrenner, 1986), and to the specific cycle of life that involves each one of us with different evolutionary crises and tasks. In this respect, I consider an *eco-systemic* perspective in *space* and *time*. Each one of us, even when we believe we are not particularly incisive, influences the context we are located in, and are, in turn, influenced by it; just as a drop falling into water generates multiple circles around the point where it falls, each of us reverberates our own way of being around us, interlacing, in an extremely complex manner, our *circles* with those of all others. Therefore in educating, it is necessary to take into account the system of relationships in which people are inserted, and it should be remembered how the relationship that we tend to generate as educators and the relationships that establish themselves in the group of pupils-clients-users are in themselves crucial in the learning process. This, among other aspects, is particularly true in the corporeal mediation workshops where the bodily, relational, expressive and emotional dimensions are central.

All this also looks to favor an assumption of the awareness of the specific geographical and cultural context in which one lives, with particular personal, natural and collective times and rhythms, with which to try to be in harmony (see Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bateson, 2007; Morin, 1994).

We must consider, in fact, that we are citizens of planet earth (see Morin, 2001) not only in the cultural and intercultural sense, but also distinctly natural. For this reason, we are sensitive to the rhythms of nature and of the cosmos. We therefore need to be in harmony with the alternation of day and night, of the seasons, climate changes, the cycles of the moon etcetera. This in our methodology can be cared for-educated through the proposal for symbolic themes linked to the seasons and the natural and cosmic cycles (see Tosi, 2012). In addition, such a reference to the *Other*, as human being, creature, element of nature, earth, universe, spirit, with which it is essential to be in harmony, is variously and richly present in

different spiritual traditions, whose narratives and symbols (which will inevitably affect the perception of nature by human) can be integrated in the setting, as I will describe shortly.

From a purely didactic perspective, taking into account the network of relationships in which everyone is involved, means that, as dance-movement educators it is important to seek interaction with most of the operators involved in the system-institution in which we work, and, as far as possible, with the other external educators and/or therapists, relatives, parents, teachers, coaches, pastors and psychotherapists... It is what was defined *ecological model*, or *integrated educational system* (see Orefice & Sarracino, 1981). What is therefore sought is effective teamwork through the hermeneutic sharing of the process in progress, recursively, with the educators involved in the educational system.

Regarding the dimension of *time*, holistic approach means considering and appreciating the specific life cycles of pupils-clients-users, with different existential crises and evolutionary tasks to be addressed, also in relation to the culture of belonging (see Erikson, 1981; Naccari, 2010). Lifelong learning, intended as broad educational attention in every existential moment of a person, is now part of the pedagogical culture of the West and its ancient roots are sunk into different cultural contexts (see Demetrio, 2003). The study of life cycles is not meant to be a theory of stages on the basis of which to read the needs of people and to prescribe relevant educational opportunities; rather it is a kind of synthesis theory relative to what has been stated about different dimensions of the development of human beings. It is an instrument at the service of the person, which may help to understand better what is happening, in which direction we are perhaps moving in order to orient *teleologically* educational opportunities. In addressing personally, or in trying to understand crisis and developmental tasks of our clients, it inevitably happens that we (or our students-customers) are involved in more than one stage, precisely because the theory is indicative and today there is a great fluidity between ages (see Sheehy 1978). However, making the effort to understand where we likely stand and where others are (even if a very articulated framework becomes clear) nevertheless makes it possible to understand better others and ourselves and to be able to better imagine and plan possible educational interventions.

Everything proposed thus far is not only the prerogative of the dance-movement educators, that should know all this, as their educational background also allows them so to propose and implement, in the best possible way, corporeal mediation workshops (see Mignosi, 2008). This entire world of intercultural knowledge, which is continually drawn upon and that is continually enriched with new and endless stimuli, is also a precious resource for students-users-clients.

In our setting, in fact, at the end of each meeting there is a space dedicated to speaking in which each person tells what they wish to share of what they have experienced, to predominantly better understand and to integrate it within one's inner world. At this stage of the meeting, those

who lead, if they deem it appropriate, may narrate meanings and cultural, intercultural and geographic references of the symbols explored, or can describe certain aspects of the cycles of life, which are being worked on. This contributes to the broadening of the user's knowledge horizons, in a knowledge-oriented manner linked to the experience, and it is also a response to the need for truth and spirituality (as opening to a deeper and more mysterious meaning, that concerns the human in their own essence) that is increasingly present in our era (see Frankl, 1996). Those who are listening to are free to address what is being narrated, and to select this with whom they feel in resonance, agreeing with the educator; at the beginning and at certain intermediate moments of the path, a number of educational objectives and possibly symbolic themes on which there is a desire to work. In this way, in a dialectic manner, in our setting (that is mainly non-verbal) there is an integration of a verbal dimension that can be compared in many ways to the *logotherapy* (*Ibidem*) and/or to the *philosophical counselling*.

4. PEDAGOGY AND DIDACTICS THROUGH THE SYMBOLIC MEDIATION

The pedagogical model that we use (as a school) is itself symbolic. A pedagogical model “represents a mediation between the dimension of being and that of the need to be” (Mollo, 2005: 41), and thus it allows the passage from the description of phenomena, and therefore from interpretations of the real, and from the anthropological concepts to the concrete educational practice. It is therefore a sort of reference framework to remember everything that should be educated in the human being. Ours is a model that makes the body itself a memorandum of the dimensions that belong to a person and that, therefore, one must always bear in mind in the educational planning. It is a synthesis that considers the personalist (see Mounier, 1955; Maritain, 1980; Ricoeur, 1998) and neo-humanist vision but also many intercultural respects, as I have previously described, of human beings.

The human body, as shown by Leonardo da Vinci in the iconic drawing of the *Vitruvian Man*, is inscribed at the same time in a circle and a square. The first refers to the spirituality of man and woman, the second to their materiality. *Flesh and spirit*, incarnation and opening to transcendence in fact characterize the reality of the human creature as dialectic polarities. These polarities are also present in the upper and lower apexes of the vertical axis that passes through the body itself; we are, in short, located between *earth* and *heaven*, i.e. between matter and spirit, between deficit needs and being needs (see Maslow, 1973), between instincts and values (see Guénon, 2002). The lower part, i.e. the legs and feet, roots us to the earth; the pelvis allows us to perceive and balance the attraction of the force of gravity. All of this symbolically refers to the need to accept limitations and naturalness, as well as the uniqueness of our birth in a precise place at particular moment in history, with two parents that we cannot change, with a culture and a historic and geographical moment that determines and substantiates

most of our way of being... But, at the same time, we are the only animal on the earth with a properly erect posture, the spine is in fact set vertically to the ground, which indicates symbolically the irrepressible longing of a person to transcend the finite, to go beyond it with the powers of thought, and, therefore, beyond the limitations posed by space and time, and even further away thanks to the power of the imagination.

The horizontal opening of the arms symbolizes the meeting with other beings, men, women, animal creatures and with the natural and cultural environment in which we live. This is the crucial dimension in which we become human beings, because man and woman *become I through the thou* (see Buber, 1993). We become human thanks to the many human relationships in which we are involved in over time.

Therefore the *great triad* (see Guénon, 2002) of the symbolic dimensions in which we are involved synthesizes the various *growths* that characterize us as human beings: the *Earth* (lower apex of verticality) concerns physical and emotional growth, physiological and safety needs (see Maslow, 1973), the need for play and movement; the *Horizon* (axis of horizontality) concerns affective-social growth, the need of love, belonging, esteem, communication and expression; the *Sky* (upper apex of verticality) concerns intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural growth. The further symbolic image that emerges from all this is that of the cross, which is a universal archetype present in many cultures. One needs only to think of the cross of Christ which, from a horrible instrument of death, becomes, thanks to the resurrection, symbol of transformation and extreme connection, in fact, between *earth* (finite, death) and *heaven* (spirit, immortality). Even in eastern philosophy along the axis of the verticality that crosses the human being are found the nuclei of vital energy (*chakras*), whose meanings are connected to the deficit needs and to being needs moving from bottom to top... I have dealt extensively with all these matters in other texts to which I am referring to (see Naccari, 2004, 2006).

The model as it is structured is a sort of *vademecum* to remember and read the educational needs and directions of the person, in order to focus on the dimension, which in turn is good to work on.

A fundamental aspect of didactic methodology is the symbolic mediation in the concrete practice of movement and dance, which allows holistic contact of the person in all its different components. The choreographic symbol, if appropriately proposed, in fact, allows activation within the self of the meanings, experiences, attitudes and values related to the symbol itself, facilitating a complex synthesis between different aspects of the human being, and allowing new and meaningful learnings.

The symbol is eminently intercultural; the same symbolic images, with connotations that differ because of their specific geographical positions, are found in distant cultures in time and space. This was precisely one of the characteristics that enabled Jung to deduce the existence of the collective unconscious composed of universal archetypes. Moreover, for Jung, “the symbol is on the one hand a primitive expression of the unconscious,

and on the other hand is an idea that corresponds to the deeper intuition of conscience” (Jung, 1997: 38). The image is “concentrated expression of the total psychic situation” (Jung, 1985: 17-18). The etymology itself of the term describes the multilateralism and, at the same time, the capacity for synthesis; *ymballein*, in fact, can be translated with *joining*, that which indicates something that is composed of several elements, and which refers to different realities. For Eliade the symbol is an

autonomous mode of knowledge [...] The symbolic thought is inherent to human beings, preceding language and discursive reasoning. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality, the deepest aspects, which are beyond any means of knowledge. The images, symbols, myths [...] respond to a need and fulfil an important function: to uncover the secret mode of being [...] They project historically conditioned human beings in a spiritual world which is infinitely richer than that of the closed world of the historical moment. (Eliade, 1980: 13-17)

The gestural symbol, therefore, both in its collective-intercultural and personal connotation, precisely because it condenses within itself not only meanings, but also existential attitudes and values, is able to arouse emotions and images that facilitate change and makes people receptive to new realities. These are dimensions connecting micro and macrocosm, i.e. realities that belong at the same time to human beings and to civilization, nature and cosmos. Identifying oneself with a symbolic image through movement can activate inside oneself the corresponding meanings. For example: dancing the archetype of the tree, everyone is able to perceive inwardly how he/she is *rooted*, thus how one is able to welcome one’s natural human reality; secondly (in terms of the polarity of the symbol) everyone can perceive how he/she allows and experiences the opening of his/her own *branches* to the sky, as an ideal inspiration, not as an escape; and how much the two dimensions are in harmony with each other.

All this allows the realization of an experiential learning in relation to the values and attitudes that are difficult to activate in a purely verbal manner. The movement, in fact, allows to experience from within the symbolic image itself, so to personally experience its potential. All of this happens in a particularly effective way, precisely because it is not limited to instructing on a plane of intellectual knowledge, but is made of immersive methodologies of experience, learning and knowledge; as such, it does not only involve rational understanding, but living; enabling knowledge to become from *Sophia*, wisdom, *Phronesis*, i.e. wisdom of life. Verbalization, as I have described previously, helps in this because it allows the realization of a varied and complex verbal and non-verbal synthesis between dimensions.

Certainly each time one proposes a symbol *from the outside*, such as a movement that is not only improvised but also learned through the traditional dance, it is inevitably actualized and personalized by the individual who is dancing and, therefore, making it his/her own. For example the *tree*,

which I have previously stated, as universal symbol of *the axis of the world* (present in the most varied cultures), “will become the olive tree under which I played as a child, or the great scented lime tree I see in front of my window when I work on the computer, or even the great oak, strong and friendly that I would like to be for my pupils and students” (Naccari, 2012: 75).

The symbol proposed *from the outside* thus connects (*circularly*) with the *inner* one, activating one’s personal resonances and meanings, whose degree of awareness varies greatly... All of them, however, some more than others, will dance the power that has the tree to rebalance high and low, heaven and earth.

5. SHAMANISTIC ORIGINS?!

Due to the value assigned to symbolic mediation, I have always considered one of our ideal references as dance-movement educators in terms of Shamanism: without underestimating the epistemological distance between our world and that of the *multiple universes* of shamanism (see Nathan & Stengers, 1998). The shaman (see Eliade, 1974) administers the power of symbols, of movement, dance, music, trance, musical instruments, and various objects, such as masks, special clothes, colors, fabrics, feathers, nature’s elements and so on... We, as dance-educators, use all of these. Without searching intentionally for a particular trance-like state, in the setting of symbolic expressive mediation, the generation of a state of consciousness different from that which is usual is inevitable; this allows a lowering of the defenses, to feel emotions, to allow oneself to imagine and to come into contact with one’s own inner world. Often, among other aspects, those who lead the movement use instruments of various kinds, perhaps to mark time or to indicate a stop, thus by administering the power of music that has often been considered in archaic cultures as a sort of mysterious language between the visible and invisible worlds.

We also use objects of various kinds such as colored cloths, balls and balloons of various sizes, sticks, newspapers, and much, much more (see Naccari, 2019: 57-58). These become a stimulus for the movement due to the characteristics of the material of which they are made and to their symbolic resonance.

The shaman is a minister of the cult and, through the rite, invokes and reactivates ancestral time, which allows all the members of the community to return to the magic and the force of that time *beyond time* and to participate in it, finding meaning and energy for their daily lives to come.

In a very similar manner, in the symbolic-anthropological setting, in the space of a meeting, it is as if we narrate a story that evokes a symbolic theme and/or myth. Through the power of music, movement and instruments and/or objects with which it is possible to dance, there is an identification with the theme suggested, thus personally reworking it. Different activities of improvisation or traditional dance as well as others are seamlessly interwoven in a specific frame, which makes up the integrator back-

ground and enables one to remain focused on the symbolic theme and the educational objective that is to be reached through it.

This weave relates to archetypal narrative roots, which, according to Jung, are both collective and unconscious matrices (forms of the collective unconscious) as well as cultural expressions (concrete manifestations of those forms). In addressing/identifying with these collective forms through corporeal and expressive mediation identification, it is possible to develop creatively one's own individual existential modes that in some way correspond to those images, activating a process of personal evolution. Thus, there is an orientation towards the realization of one's existential authenticity, and towards the process of identification. The latter is understood as both a conscious comparison and assumption of collective meanings, and as an integration of unconscious experiences and ideals, in any case the two realities are in evident dialectic circularity with each other (see Naccari, 2004: 27). The process that is activated is thus both that of the conscious comparison with attitudes and meanings, and that of integrating sensations and hidden or latent instances that may emerge thanks to the proposed activities. All this however always occurs in the symbolic-mythical frame proposed by those who lead, which thus allows in a certain sense appropriate orientation and integration of the process of change.

The shaman is also a medicine man and psychopomp, in the sense that he cures not only with herbs, but also through his superior ability to sustain the soul on a journey that leads it back from the other-worlds where it was lost to the collective world to which it belongs, during which it is supported by the entire village. In a certain way we are doing something very similar, because we are trying to channel emotions and states of mind, of those who dance with us, towards more harmonic and evolutionary possibilities for one's own special path in life and in consideration of the context in which each one is inserted.

This is in fact possible through *the proposal of the right symbol* for that person at that particular existential moment. Durand expresses this concept as follows:

The psychotherapist who has to deal with depressive psychopaths injects into their asthenic psyche antagonistic images, images of ascension, of vertical conquest. And immediately, [...] consciousness undergoes a genuine moral revitalization [...] Similarly, in order to balance the neuropath who tends to lose touch with reality, Desoille makes them dream no longer of the ascent, but the descent to earth [...] So in these therapeutic methodologies the change of regime sets up first imagination, and then behavior, a symbolic re-balancing. (Durand, 2002: 107-108)

Also, in a pedagogical key, the symbolic dance theme is chosen on the basis of what people are deficient in. Initially it would be good to dance using the themes with which they already feel comfortable with, in order to be able to become familiar with the specific educational language, with the

group as well as with those who lead. A remarkable merit of the shamanistic therapy, from which we have much to learn, is to not to isolate the sick person, but to give them an important role in relation to the whole community. Tobie Nathan (see Nathan & Stengers, 1998) in speaking of non-western cultures, “*savage*”, defines them *multiple universes societies*. This means that for them the world that we see is only one of the possible worlds, there are many others, inhabited by spirits, that are very different from each other; he calls our society, “*scientific*”, with unique universe, that of the “alleged” scientific truth. What characterizes shamanistic therapies is substantially the reference and the restoration of the sick person to his/her own culture and community. The sick person, therefore, is not alone with his/her problem, is instead firmly linked to the system of interpreting the world of his/her people, and, because he/she is sick, plays for them an important role in mediating between the worlds; thanks to the illness, he/she has the power to allow them to communicate with other worlds, to bring messages from the spirits.

Many traditional dances, until the last century also in Italy, used to ritualize this therapeutic valence of movement, such as the restoration of symbolic identity of culture of belonging (see Naccari, 2016b). An example of this can be traced to *tarantism* from the south of Italy (see De Martino, 2002). In the symbolic-anthropological setting, ethnic dances are used in all their cultural and community value. Moreover the attention towards the person is never alone as it is individual; there is a constant effort to consider and to enhance the subtle threads of membership to one’s own loved ones, to one’s own community, one’s own culture in the intercultural opening and one’s faith (whatever it may be), in the opening to the widest possible and authentically dialogical ecumenism.

6. NOTES ON THE SPECIFIC METHODOLOGY

To enable the entrance into the specifics of the method, I will describe below in summary the basic characteristics of the setting of a meeting of symbolic-anthropological bodily mediation (the setting is described in detail in Naccari, 2006: 211-246; and 2012: 53-62). First, one should bear in mind that the structure of each meeting is always carried out in three phases patterns. Initially, the warm-up is never simply physical but also relational and emotional, and as well introduces the chosen symbolic theme. This phase lasts as long as people in the group need to be able to engage fully in play. Immediately after the warm-up we often propose an ethnic dance, or a sequence of *expression primitive* (see Schott Billmann, 2011), that condenses the symbolic image which will be addressed below in the next phase of exploration. The choreographic sequence aims to enhance the sense of belonging to the group, and to allow familiarizing oneself with the chosen theme by starting to acquire some gestures that are related to it. The next part, the exploration, is the central part in which one fully immerses oneself in the experience of movement in the proposed theme of the meeting. Here the per-

ceptual, emotional, intuitive, imaginative, relational, analogical and expressive processes have the supremacy over our usual mode of being conscious and over our language. At this stage it is as if we can suspend the time and space of everyday life, to experience a sort of extended present.

The phase that closes the meeting, which we call integration, is that which allows to return to a state of daily consciousness, while at the same time seeking to create the synthesis of what has emerged, allowing oneself to integrate this experience into one's daily life. In this part of the meeting, we often propose the development of an individual or group choreography in which to focus and condense the most important aspects that have emerged during the meeting. We may also propose a plastic-pictorial reworking that is isomorphic to the theme chosen.

For example, if I proposed to dance their own *tree*, this will be the subject of the design of each person, after all the drawings can be placed together to create a large collective mural. If I have worked on *shaping*, sculpting statues in space, I can propose the use of the collage technique, which retains the same purpose on another plane and in another language. If work has been performed on abandonment, it will probably be useful to work with finger paints, which facilitate regressive and fusional experiences. Another possibility of integration is narrative reworking (see Naccari 2016a), where it is possible to invent a story or tale from what has emerged, to write a poem or a poetic text, to narrate a part of one's own biography. Usually, at the end, whether another technique of reworking the experiences has already been used, or none has been used whatsoever, *verbalization* (talking about the experience) is used to describe and better focus on the experience and to remember it. Therefore, *verbalization* is not just for the purposes of interpretation, but it is used to find the words to describe what has emerged, to increasingly better integrate into the consciousness new dimensions and experiences. The space of integration is also the time when the educator, as in the case I described earlier, can tell the cultural relevance of symbols that have been explored; this allows a global integration of the gestures and themes explored. An aspect always present in our setting is that related to the synchrony of the basic theme; this means that from the warm-up to the integration, attention is paid in proposing activities about the same educational and/or therapeutic objective through the chosen symbolic mediation. For example, if the chosen theme is that of the *cross*, since the warm-up all the activities allow the perception of one's own verticality and horizontality, then an ethnic dance related to this theme is proposed (for example, a Greek dance); through the exploration, between other activities, it is possible to integrate a *visualization* on the axes and then to take them into the space and dance them... In integration, everyone can design their own personal way in which they have *seen*, perceived and danced all this. The basic objective here is not only to harmonize the three dimensions, but also to *center oneself* in relation to this; based on the specific needs of the group, the educator will place the emphasis on one thing or another...

Yet, another feature is the dynamic and harmonic continuity between diachrony and synchrony and the way to live time, space and personal resonances within the theme suggested by those involved. Everything that is proposed never resents abrupt transitions or interruptions, so that those people who are dancing are eased into immerse wholly themselves in the experience. All this in listening to timing and the specific needs of the group; in fact, regarding the latter the person that leads the group can adapt the time and the ways of the proposals during the meeting.

The most important symbols and narratives used in the meetings of symbolic-anthropological bodily mediation, both through the choreography of ethnic dances and through other expressive activities include the circle, the *mandala*, the cross, the labyrinth, the opposed rows, the tree, the cycle of the sun, the great triad and many others. They are proposed in all their intercultural forms, not only to learn and express on a choreographic plane, but to revive the old pedagogical meaning of them, which involves people holistically in their multiple realities: the physical, the emotional-affective, the relational-social, the intuitive-imaginative, cognitive, ethical, spiritual, creative, natural cultural and ... intercultural ones.

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