

***Psychology, clowning and psychodrama: collective construction for learning
and intervention purposes***

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Abstract

This article aims to share the experience of the Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama Study and Practice Group (GEP), highlighting the potential of working with active learning methodologies in binding Psychodrama and Clowning concepts. GEP, coordinated by psychologists with Psychodrama and Clowning degrees, promotes a reflection on health and social issues through creative interventions. Each monthly and open meeting is held with the participants, encouraging their empowerment in the collective and transdisciplinary construction of knowledge.

Keywords: psychodrama, clown, psychology, active methods, groups

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ENCOUNTERS AND FAILURES: THE BEGINNING OF GEP

What we are about to say may sound strange to you, but the Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama Study and Practice Group (GEP) was created after an unsuccessful sociodrama session, i.e., from a failure. Or rather, the idea of GEP came up after a meeting that worked very well, but that deconstructed planned cultural conserves⁴. On that day, Marília and Kim were expecting a group of customers for a session in which they would direct a sociodrama workshop about their professional role. Other similar sociodrama sessions had already been conducted with more than ten participants, and the expectation that evening was to form a group with various individuals to develop an interesting study. That night, however, not only was the city of Porto Alegre caught off guard by a major storm, but also the organizers of the place where the sociodrama session was to be held had not disclosed the event as they had done on previous occasions. Ten minutes after the time set to begin the activity, no one had arrived. As Marília was thinking “thank goodness no one is here to witness our failure”, a hurried but enthusiastic woman entered the room with soaked hair and clothes. She said she had come to the sociodrama session, leaving Marília and Kim embarrassed as she would probably be the only participant that evening.

Marília and Kim sat on the pillows and began talking with the unexpected participant, Rita, a psychologist, actress, and clown. Rita – the third author of this article – had already heard of Grupo 3 de Nós, and found that this was a great opportunity to learn about Psychodrama. As an actress and psychologist, Rita was used to hearing that Psychodrama strongly related to her work, since it combined theater and psychology. They were excited about Rita’s interest in Psychodrama, but unfortunately there were not enough participants to carry out the planned sociodramatic intervention.

To make the most of that meeting, Marília e Kim proposed that they talk about how they work with Psychodrama while Rita shared her observations as a clown and a psychologist. Amid thunder and lightning and while eating delicious croissants, we began this unexpected conversation about Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama. At this moment, GEP was born.

Before meeting Rita, Kim and Marília had never really given too much thought about clowns: they imagined the circus performer who always repeats the same jokes, without spontaneity. Marília could not understand how a clown could assist psychology interventions. Rita then came up with another Clowning possibility whereby improvisation, humor, role-playing, and meetings could be therapeutic. Our conversation was so inspiring that we agreed to meet on other occasions to think of possible interactions between our areas of practice as psychologists.

A few months after this first conversation, we decided to establish formal meetings and studies, thus creating the Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama Study and Practice Group (GEP). The idea was to study texts about Psychodrama or Clowning and propose games, role-plays or related practices at monthly open meetings.

While organizing GEP, we were taken by some surprises and deconstructed some of the cultural conserves we had about the expected attendees and the bibliographical references

⁴ Cultural conserve is the crystallization of a product resulting from a process of creation. "The cultural conserve is proposed to be the finished product and, as such, has acquired an almost sacred quality." (Moreno, 1997, p. 158).

available. We thought, for example, that the few people that would be interested in Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama were actors, actresses and professional clowns. However, most GEP participants are in fact Psychology students and practitioners who are not trained in performing arts, but who would like to experiment with other ways of proposing interventions. There are also a number of GEP participants who come from different professional backgrounds, such as philosophy, pedagogy, journalism, advertising, medicine and social services. As regards the material published on the subject, we were surprised not to find publications that associated the two areas, considering that both are intervention tools related to Psychology and theatre. In the Journal Portal of the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES), for instance, containing hundreds of articles on both areas, not one of them combined both subjects - the terms "psychodrama" and "clowning", and "psychodrama" and "clown" were used in the search.

The search for texts involving some kind of sharing of experience that brought Psychodrama and Clowning closer together was not successful. This meant that, from the first GEP meetings, we - organizers and participants - needed to create, without any prior written cultural conserves, a theoretical and practical integration process that could be used in the interventions proposed by the group. Initially, we selected some texts introducing Morenian theory and philosophy, as well as some articles, dissertations and theses that mention Clowning as an art of life. The emphasis of our meetings varied between clowns and Psychodrama. There was no use in trying to bring these two practices closer together if we did not have the least idea of the proposal of each approach and the philosophical differences. At each meeting we deepened our experience, and the dialogue between these two approaches began occurring spontaneously.

GEP: ACTIVE, COLLECTIVE, NARRATIVE, INVENTIVE METHODOLOGIES

Inspired by the happiness⁵ that resulted from our group of studies and practices, we wrote this article in which we describe the learning process developed in GEP since November 2017. GEP uses active learning methodologies to collectively bring Psychodrama and Clowning closer together, prizing each participant's unique experience, as well as autonomy, freedom and protagonism in proposing other interpretations and experiences for the group.

In most GEP editions, a reference material (text or film) is sent one week before the meeting so that participants can study the material in order to discuss it and propose practices that relate to the topic at issue. The meetings usually begin with a warm-up activity, either a game or a specific role-play on the topic, and subsequently each participant shares his/her experience, associating the theoretical reference material to the proposed practices. Although organized and coordinated by a group of psychologists, there is flexibility for improvisation, according to the group's spontaneity. Any participant can propose reading materials or direct games or role-plays that enhance learning - before or during the meeting - as long as the group agrees.

To record this methodological course of learning, a collective field diary is used in which speeches, actions, feelings, thoughts and reflections occurring during and after the meetings are registered in writing. The collective field diary is open to all participants who wish to read or narrate experiences that have taken place in the group. The participant who writes in the collective diary may identify him/herself or not, but it is agreed that the intention of the narratives is to be a part of, or relate to other fragments written by other authors. As for

⁵ In the book "Dialogues", Deleuze and Parnet (1998) are inspired by the philosopher Espinosa to think of joy and sadness. For these authors, joyous passions are affections that can increase our ability of acting and being.

confidentiality and ethical issues, we emphasize that the GEP participants agree that the material produced during the meetings - written and narrative – may be included in research and articles. However, fictitious names are used to preserve the identity of participants in the collective field diary.

The collective approach to production of knowledge in the GEP is inspired by the problematizing pedagogy, proposed by Paulo Freire (2006), which contributes philosophically to thinking of the construction of active learning methodologies (Simon, Jezine, Vasconcelos & Ribeiro, 2014). As in Moreno's socionomic project (1994), the promotion of autonomy is one of the focus points, whether of the student or of the group at issue. The problematizing pedagogy proposes "a teaching-learning process that assumes respect for the student's cultural baggage, as well as the knowledge built in community practice" (Mitre et al., 2008, p. 2.136).

Therefore, the active methodologies are shown as a process - more than an end - via problematization, inserted in a proposal of joint construction between student and teacher, and may include other relationships and roles, such as a study group in which all members can collaborate with their knowledge (Simon et al., 2014). As a way to provide formative practices in GEP, we use active methodologies that seek to articulate all the actors in the process of collective construction of learning by promoting freedom in the process of thinking and working as a team, in order to bring Psychology, Psychodrama and Clowning closer together.

WHAT CLOWN IS THIS?

When we refer to Clowning, we are not talking about clown stereotypes, which often appear on television or in rehearsed circus shows. The Clowning to which we refer is the art of Encounter, co-constructed on improvisation, similarly to Psychodrama. This Clowning is marked by humor, laughter with the other individual, and not of the other individual. When speaking of clowns, Rita Barboza (2016) says that the laughter is unique, connected to the here-and-now experience; humor is associated with a transgression of the status quo, that is, what is culturally conserved. Clowning is phenomenological becoming, a constant process of being in motion; therefore, the clown cannot be fully defined under the cultural conserves of words. Some people say that the answer to the question "What is a clown?" is harder than performing any of the incredible numbers at the circus. This is because the force of this art lies precisely there - on this mutant and spontaneous being.

Still, we venture to say that clowning is to be in a different relationship with the world of humans, where sensitivity and Encounter are above reason. The logic behind Clowning is naivety, cruelty, simplicity, empathy, and affection. Dorneles (2003) refers to clowns as an inverse visitor of the human world: he/she usually appears as an antithesis of another persona who represents balance, order and perfection. The clown is the scared individual who frequently represents the human weaknesses. This is also true at the circus, when the clown is a contrast to the virtuous characters.

Barboza (2016) emphasizes that clowns are usually divided into two lines: one that values gags⁶ and the other that concentrates on how it will be done - instead of what is going to be done - considering the here-and-now experience and the Encounter. The line that we seek to use in GEP is the one that works with improvisations and Encounters. "To produce a clown it is necessary to create a body and an opening to what happens, to what comes from the outside - to the unforeseen, the chance, the improvisation, the public" (Kásper, 2004, 33).

⁶ Ready-made jokes or scenes that are rehearsed and repeated.

Differently from Psychodrama, Clowning does not have a creator described in literature. "From the refusal of the idea of a 'single and true' origin, it opens the possibility of conceiving several beginnings for the clowns" (Sacchet, 2009, p.1). According to Kásper (2004), the clown is formed from collective enunciation: various clowns construct other possibilities of a logic of existence.

This art is represented in the most varied cultures and ancient rites, as clown-related or eccentric figures. Laughter - which is what the clown provokes - is used by ancient peoples to scare away fear, especially fear of death (Castro, 2005). For example, in the Yoruba culture, the six masks of the Egun-gun culture are a hunchback, an albino, a leper, a prognathic figure, a dwarf and a cripple, figures representing buffoons: grotesque and comic characters. Indigenous tribes have a sort of shaman whose function was to "transmute sorrows, dispel tensions of participants, and even cure illnesses" (Sacchet, 2009, 4). Currently, we still have the figure of the Hotxua, a kind of sacred clown of the Kraho tribe of Tocantins, in Brazil.

Not only is the clown being present in countless cultures and sacred rites, it is one of the oldest professions in the world. Jesters, for example, were buffoons and clowns at the service of kings, nobles, or people who hired them for festivities and rites of passage. Their main responsibility was to provoke laughter.

In order to study the story of the clown, the author Sacchet (2009) proposes the concept of rhizome described by Deleuze and Guattari (1995). In the introduction to the book "Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia," the authors compare a rhizome with the family tree. The root of the genealogical tree forks from a central stem; the branches follow a hierarchical order. In other words, from the root it is possible to establish orders of ascent and descent, and, as such, the tree is called genealogical. The rhizome, however, is a portion of stems, usually underground (as with the roots), but that grows horizontally without a hierarchy of origin or obedience to a given predetermined rule. "By adopting a changeable logic of its own, with many beginnings and multiple outputs, rhizomatic relationships begin and end based on the intensity of the meetings, creating and destroying temporary territories" (Sacchet, 2009, p.8).

Clowning is formed by rhizomes: its history and organization occur by multiple possibilities of connection over time. There is no concern in categorizing or classifying it. The power of the clown is in its flexibility to compose and create other logics of existence and humor - there is no right or wrong way to clowning. According to Sacchet (2009), it is important to understand the art of the clown in his/her multiplicity and ability to survive and reinvent himself/herself in each different performance. The meetings nourish these clown roles, which contaminate other social roles giving meaning to a relational life.

WITH YOU, OUR WORDS

How can we talk about an experience without killing it, suffocating it with right words and polite answers? Here we present to readers what happens in GEP, through clippings from the field diary that gave us clues on how to bring Psychology, Clowning and Psychodrama closer together through experiences.

A palhaçaria é a nossa obra, diz a autora.

E eis que obramos um encontro.

Entre lidos e não lidos, psicólogas, palhaças, psicodramaticistas, ou não.

DASEIN – Ser aí. Ser no mundo. Ser em relação.

*Presentificar-se.*⁷ (Extracted from the collective field diary)

⁷ Free translation: "Clowning is our work, says the author. And we worked towards an Encounter. Among those who have read and not read, psychologists, clowns, psychodramatists, or not. DASEIN – Being there. Being in the world. Being in relation. Being present."

Similarly to Clown and Psychodrama, GEP occurs in the present, in the here-and-now experience of the relationships. Despite previously planned (games, text and main theme), each meeting respects the actual moment, embracing the singularity of each participant. And here is Moreno's spontaneity-creativity in GEP: the capacity of a human being to adapt adequately to new situations or to propose new responses to old situations (Moreno, 1997). GEP seeks to stimulate situations in which spontaneity-creativity is connected with the here-and-now experience, expanding the state of spontaneity of one participant to all others in the same group.

*A energia foi chegando em muitos estados. Mais tímida para uns, que chegaram solitários e sem conhecer ninguém, mais fechada para outros que até vieram em grupo, mas querendo ficar só observando. Não dá pra só observar. De fora não se vê!!! Tudo acontece em relação. Outros repetem a sua presença. Mas de forma completamente diferente. Falamos sobre Psicodramas. Psicodrama e educação, psicodrama e terapia, psicodrama e democracia! Falamos, mas também massageamos, caminhamos, jogamos. Que louca capacidade esta do GEP de se transformar. Saio do encontro curiosa: o que será que seremos no mês que vem?*⁸ (Extracted from the collective field diary)

One of the logics of life that the clown invites us to experience is joy. Clowning proposes to extend the joyful affections that promote Encounters, movements and more possibilities of existences (Káspér, 2004). Marília Bruhn (2018) points out that "the psychodramatic approach, rather than focusing...on each person's difficulties, emphasizes the spontaneity and creative capacity that each human being has" (p. 101). As such, Morenian spontaneity-creativity is as close to joy as Espinosa's Clowning: both increase our capacity to act and to be based on affections.

*Ahhhh não vai dar tempo
se vira então
mais mar, sol, lua, pássaro
se vira de novo, pois
e de novo e de novo e de novo
agora sim você deu o Novo, esse diferente-só teu, só-nosso
sabe, existem coisas que só você pode nos dar – ninguém mais!!! é claro
e sabe, existe o tempo que é como vento
e o tempo que é pra voar com o vento
Então, recebendo o novo de fulano, ciganos, letrados, folclores
como cores que correm.*⁹ (Extracted from the collective field diary)

⁸ Free translation: "The energy was coming in many states. More timid to some, who came alone and without knowing anyone; more closed to others, who although had come in a group, just wanted to watch. You cannot just watch. It cannot be seen from the outside!! Everything happens in a relationship. Others repeat their presence. But in a completely different way. We talked about Psychodramas. Psychodrama and education, psychodrama and therapy, psychodrama and democracy! We talk, but we also massage, walk, play. What a crazy ability of GEP to transform. I leave the meetings with a curious thought: What will we be next month?"

⁹ Free translation: "Ahhh, there won't be enough time. Find a way then. More sea, sun, moon, bird. Find a way again, then and again and again. Now you brought out your new self, this one is different – only yours, only ours. You know, there are things that only you can give us – no one else!!! Of course. And you know, there is the time that is like the wind and the time that is to fly with the wind. So, receiving the new self from so-and-so, from changeable so-on and from so-forth like colors that run."

The relationship with time is also a part of the intersection between Clowning and Psychodrama. The GEP takes place based on timing of the affection, in the here-and-now experience, moments in which we allow ourselves to play. In both, the game can be defined as an entertainment, a pastime subject to certain rules, existing according to the limits of time and space, in which we become more spontaneous, relational, creative. "The essence of the game lies in this capacity for spontaneity, which gives rise to a sense of freedom in the game and allows man to 'travel' to the world of imagination and, through it, recreate and discover new forms of action" (Monteiro, 1994, pp. 18-19). The game allows us to be integrated with action, thought and emotions. For a game to take place, the participants must want to play and be available for the game, so that all their "seriousness", their spontaneous and creative value is not lost. In other words, for a game to take place, the players need freedom.

*um encontro muito loko
começou com o Seu Ary, poeta louco sábio
ai vieram outros devaneios e lançamentos de bergamotas.
veio Flicts que é cor de burro quando foge
fomos à lua
e à realidade nua e crua do preconceito racial
conceição, evaristo, djamila, ziraldo, pretas, pretos.
e nós brancos, brancos, brancas.
potências psicodramáticas e circenses, salvai-nos de nossa estupidez!
meia, meia lua, um, dois, três!*¹⁰(Extracted from the collective field diary)

The clown is made up of many impulses and wills, and improvisation occurs when the clown externalizes these impulses produced in connection with the people having in mind the here-and-now experience. The Clowning games used in the GEP focused on leveraging the self, increasing feelings, allowing failures and fears, showing our ridiculous side and making us laugh - they also involved the body, evidencing how the person is feeling here and now. One of the games proposed was to feel by means of percentages - to overflow the feeling proposed by the facilitator. When dramatizing this meeting, one of the participants said she felt anger, and she was asked to externalize and increase it. Exaggeration and extrapolation of feelings and characteristics of the self is one of the features of the role of clown. These games facilitated the contact with the self, increasing spontaneity, and helping with the creative process of Psychodrama.

*Que grande e potente é o psicodrama e a palhaçaria, que grande ideia essa de unir as duas técnicas, garantindo essa possibilidade, liberdade de desaguar, se descobrir, se projetar e se deixar tomar por tudo que vem numa sessão como a nossa . . .*¹¹ (Extracted from the collective field diary)

If the Self exists only in a relational perspective, relationships and Encounter are the soul of the GEP. Encounters similar to those of Hasidism, which inspired Moreno and Buber, in which the divine, the creative and the creator emerge from the enthusiasm of personal

¹⁰ Free translation: "a very crazy meeting. It started with Mr. Ary, a wise and mad poet, then came other daydreams and tangerine launching. Flicts came, which has an indescribable color. We went to the moon and to the naked reality of racial prejudice. Conceição Evaristo, Djamila, Ziraldo, black boys, black girls and we are white, white, white. Psychodramatic and clowning powers, save us from our stupidity! Half, half moon, one, two, three!"

¹¹ Free translation: "How great and powerful are Psychodrama and clowning, what a great idea to unite these two techniques, enabling freedom to drain, discover, project and let oneself be taken by everything that arises in a session like ours. . ."

contact, joy, pleasure, contemplation combined with the movement and the consequent non-alienation of thoughts (Boscolo, 2015, Fonseca, 1980). Psychodrama and Clowning have an integral perspective of being human, in which body and mind are one. As mentioned by Dorneles (2003), the clown's corporeality - everything in it - is expressed (or enhanced) by his grimaces, his body, his breathing, his gaze. Amaral (2013) further describes the body of the clown as a "mutant body that transits through different environments, transforming and being transformed, . . . craftsman of the environments where he works and of the metamorphoses that take place in his own body" (p. 80).

A STRANGE (NON)CONCLUSION

The reports of the collective field journal produced in the GEP meetings permitted the drafting of this article, of which one of the main objectives is to share experiences that bring psychodramatic concepts closer to the art of the clown. In this learning process, the active methodologies were highlighted - both in the study group formation process and in the co-construction of this article - allowing an expanded and complex view of other ways of learning and intervening. In the GEP, the group becomes the protagonist of its learning, facilitating the meeting between Psychology, Psychodrama and Clowning.

Bearing in mind GEP reports and approaches with active learning methodologies, a formal conclusion as an end to something sounds strange. Let us say then that this is an unusual, creative, spontaneous conclusion. Like our strange first meeting-failure, we present a conclusion that does not conclude, an ending that does not end, a dance awaiting for the next song. As clearly seen, Psychodrama and Clowning complement each other, for they see each other in a sensitive, careful, singular way, while the active methodologies propose a learning built together, from me-you relationships.

If Moreno (1997) already said that a response leads to many other questions, and not a definitive solution, the active methodologies present themselves in a psychodramatic way when putting into practice the teaching based on problematization, on doubt, on reflection - and not on a full stop - as well as this strange (non)conclusion.

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