



There is a Cat on The Couch

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In this article we will explain our view of the cat and what we project ourselves onto the cat. Sometimes we repair ourselves through the cat, and from a psychoanalytic point of view, it is as if we start again with an infant's psyche development. However, when we look at a cat's relationship with us, it only uses its eyes and body; its feeling is limited, it does not have a "language" in terms of speech, and it makes us feel helpless, evoking the infant psyche. For this reason, the article will start with a short description of the baby's psyche development and end with a case in which we explain the cat's place in the session.

After a baby is born, it has its own dominance in its relationship with the world. Neither he/she nor the "other" literally exists. Instead, there is the "thing" that feeds and nurses it. There is no object nor subject, and the baby is still at the presymbolic level in this period. Ogden defines this period as an autistic contiguous position (Ogden,1989). In this position, the infant experiences a feeling of disintegration, disengagement, and anxiety. The infant experiences its mother's voice, touch, and, most importantly, its mother's gaze during this period in his relationship. For the infant, there are no feelings in this period but sensations that it cannot transform.

The infant must constantly look into the mother's eyes to increase the mother's inclusiveness. By looking into its mother's eyes and responding to its touches, the infant builds a stimulus barrier for itself and becomes a self-organized creature by making its container over time. Meanwhile, the mother translates the beta elements from the infant with the alpha function. While the sensations of the infant transform the feelings, Babblings begin to turn into language, and language enters the mother-infant relationship as a third. With the emergence of sounds and words, the child attempts to define itself, yielding to the rules of authority and losing itself, losing its original pure state. As the infant's language forms with words, representations begin to be included in the mind.

The infant establishes connections between memory islands in mind; external and internal begin to separate as healthy, and I and the other begin to emerge (Kernberg,1984). When the mother cannot contain enough, the infant builds a capsule to protect itself or starts using primitive defenses such as splitting and projection intensively. Suppose the distinction between the infant's internal and external objects does not occur. In that case, the infant cannot construct paths between internal partial and external objects; objects manifest themselves in parts rather than as a whole. It is the premise for the formation of psychotic and borderline traits. This causes the formation of borderline and psychotic features. However, we know that each individual has these

psychotic and borderline islets in his/herself. The effort to define these connected or disconnected islets in the person's mind may continue through culture, a child, or a pet. Mainly since these undefined parts are composed of untransformed "things", when the person finds a tool to transform them into words and the sensations into emotions, the individual object becomes a therapeutic tool for the person.

House cats are one of the creatures that allow people to self-identify and have a therapeutic effect on some people. The relationship between humans and cats began 10-12 thousand years ago; cats were first mouse hunters and then became house owners. Cats started their history as witches and devils. Then, they assumed the symbols of fertility goddesses. Their position in mythology has always included an ambivalence.

The features of a house cat that can be seen by everyone is that it is a very independent animal itself: it usually tries to dominate the house for example, it watches the house from the high corner of the house. In addition to it, Part-whole relationship in cat's mind is not formed enough and the emotion is not developed enough as another pet dog, and sometimes it isn't easy to establish a connection. While the cat can sometimes see you as a threat, the cat can sometimes come and snuggle up to you; it is alert, sometimes inactive, and can attack you when you restrict its pleasure. Another feature of cats is that their ability to act as a group is quite limited compared to dogs, which are another mammal, their eye contact is limited, and they often do not look at their names. They can even attack creatures that are many times stronger than themselves. Despite these ambivalent, uncanny and grandiose characteristics of cats, they have managed to find a place for themselves in all of our homes. Undoubtedly, the reasons for this are that it is easy to care for and its capacity to stay alone at home is better than other pets. So, can the motivation that makes them enter our lives so much is related to our inner world?

When we try to think of cats as human beings, the traits we will probably find in them are primarily narcissistic and autistic traits. If we continue to consider from this point of view, the age range in which the cat finds itself is undoubtedly the first year of an infant. Does a cat have another and feelings? Or can a cat be considered a subject? Undoubtedly, the cat is neither a subject nor the external objects an other for the cat. There is usually only one caregiver for the cat or none at all. Considered in this way, the cat can be in a paranoid-schizoid position and autistic contagious period with its behaviors. In the cat's universe, there are things that it senses, and there are untransformed particles, shapeless, mute. The probably untransformed exterior and the interior are always perceived as a threat to it, which is why the cat usually chooses the only place to sit. So, where the cat sits is not a chair but rather what its body is in contact with. The cat's thinking of everything as its own, like a baby's primary narcissism, and sometimes, on the contrary, being very vulnerable, narcissistic features, aggressive trapping behaviors and a paranoid-schizoid position come to mind.

So, how can the relationship between cats and humans be explained? If we look at this from a Lacanian point of view, the infant begins to define itself first in front of the mirror; in this presymbolic period, it is free while there is no speech yet, and its essence is in appearance(Lacan,1977). In this sense, the cat is a creature that has remained at the presymbolic level; from time to time, it goes and looks in the mirror and follows its

movements. The cat often does not accept authority and lives on its own. In this sense, could the cat represent our presymbolic, unauthorized, limitless side or the side that wants to be?

On the other hand, when we look at the relationship between the cat and its owner from a Lacanian point of view, the relationship between mother and infant is similar to the relationship between a binary that exists for each other. Before the language, the baby experiences an illusion where it feels completeness with his mother. The start of language destroys this sense of unity, and this experience becomes a missed experience (Tyson, 2006). The individual pursues this lost experience - this experience where he/she feels complete throughout his life. Is it an experience where we go after this sense of completeness in our relationship with the cat? While the cat revives our presymbolic position, it also enables us to regain the feeling of fullness that we have lost.

If we try to explain the role of the cat through narcissism, first of all, it is necessary to define the cat as an object. The cat is, at the same time, fragile and attacking, an attacking object capable of striking a dog that is both very strong and much stronger than itself. In an infant, the entire libido is directed towards primary narcissism, since the infant does not yet have the other. With the emergence of the other, the other becomes bad, and the good becomes himself. When those suitable for themselves are not adequately mirrored by the parent who is not "good enough", the formation of self-ideal, ego and superego is interrupted. The caregivers of people with narcissistic pathology do not mirror enough; they are more after their own needs. It disrupts the formation of bad and good objects inside and outside. The good stay inside; the devalued others outside are aggressive and dangerous. These projected parts are undoubtedly the self that the person throws out when the good and bad self-objects cannot be integrated. Individuals know that they have to hide their primitive aspects in society according to the degree of their pathology. Therefore, a cat is an object we can eliminate and externalize. At the same time, it is a structure that we can repair over and over again.

In other words, a cat is an object we project; we have difficulty looking at it and a creature with a therapeutic effect. Most of the time, petting the cat, trying to make eye contact, feeding it, and taking its poop, is a repetition of that relationship in infancy? For some of us, looking at a cat is a manifestation of those moments - memory traces which are impossible to remember at that time. A creature that we repair ourselves by reversing care we don't see, a creature that heals. Sometimes a cat becomes a transitional object that a small child (today's adult) wants to keep with him when he is separated from his mother. The first pet adopted by adults who have separated from their families is often a cat. At this point, the cat is a creature that enables the "child" adult to cope with separation more easily. It is also a healing creature that reduces anxiety by finding an animal that cannot leave itself under its control after parents whose children have become adults send their children from home.

So how does the cat find a place in the analysand and the analyst's room? Undoubtedly, the cat is both on the sofa and sitting in the analyst's chair from time to time. While the setting provides a safe feeling, the analyst's position behind the analysand and the lack of eye contact may do the opposite. It brings to mind the cat and its owner.

On the couch, the analysand is mirroring himself while trying to find or not his reflections in the analyst's mind. The help of analyst tries to make the wall that the analyst sees a mirror and removes the pieces that blur or darken the images with his comments. Analysand sometimes lies on a sofa like a little cat, lacking eye contact, a self-interested caregiver trying to tame him. As the caregiver keeps the cat inside the house, analysand waits the analyst tames his wildest feelings. But inside this room is not only the analysand like a cat but occasionally a cat in the analyst. The analyst's comments are sometimes similar to the cat in the house squeezing our nails at the most unexpected moments. At this point, a dance begins between these two trapped inside the house/room, which includes ambivalent feelings of love and hates at the same time. The analyst is a cat that pulls his nails; maybe the analyst is repairing his childhood by putting the analysand in the position of a cat. At the same time, the cat restores the caregiver's own early childhood care for the analysand.

What is missing from this article is undoubtedly a case showing the function of a real cat in the therapy of the analysand/child.

D. was a 6-year-old girl I saw three times a week, brought by her mother and father, whom I had seen in my clinic years ago. The most crucial complaint brought by D's family was her behavior that was harmful to the environment and that she did not comply with the limits. Since D. messed up the first session, her father held her hands and allowed the session to continue. In the first session, D was walking around, finding something to start a fight with, and physically hurting me and his family. It was difficult for me to invite D. to work as a psychotherapy patient. During our sessions, D. would become frustrated at points that would make her feel weak—for example, that a shape made from dough is not perfect—she would lose eye contact and could not understand words. My help at this point was to protect myself first and then calm her down with a few simple words. Because I knew that she was regressed to a pre-linguistic point at these moments, that there was no duality in the room, that is, the other was not for her, she lost eye contact, and the authority was not there for her. At these points, she was reminiscent of cats attacking out of fear and despair in the street. Finally, it was running out of the room and going out. While the sessions continued at the same intensity over the months, I heard from her parents that she was torturing her cat at home. They lived with a cat in their house.

D. loved her cat very much. However, from time to time, she imprisoned her cat in a box and waited. This theme came to the therapy room after a while. She became a cat in the room, and I became the hunter who imprisoned her, the wrong person. The cat meowed sweetly to get out, but it turned into a lion after a while. However, after this lion escaped his confinement, she took refuge with good people and took care of them by telling her that an evil hunter kidnapped her. Although the care she received in her new home was excellent, she could not stand this "goodness" and ran away again. I told her that from time to time, she felt tormented like this cat in the house and trapped and that the hours of these sessions and being in the office were just like that cat feeling.

D. mirrored herself in the cat she had imprisoned in her house. Trying to understand what the cat was feeling, she understood what she was feeling. The cat has

been a therapeutic tool for me. I was describing how imprisoned the cat felt and how hard it was for her to be close, as if everything outside was dangerous for the cat. While I was telling her this, the cat was no longer imprisoned in the box. It went from torture in the sessions to a place where no hunters tried to harm him. Of course, D.'s destructive behaviour did not stop when the cat entered the session. However, the cat in the house helped her understand how she felt and who was the prisoner/imprisoned.

As a result, a cat is often not just a house cat in our lives. The unique primitive characteristics of the cat ensure that the most primitive (undeveloped) parts of the human are represented. While this representation sometimes allows the person to repair himself, sometimes it relieves the emotional burden traits of his/her personality hidden in the projection of "bad", "poor" or "grandiose" parts. What we, as psychotherapists/analysts, can do is to understand these cats "out there" and help the client internalize and repair these cats. What happens in the therapy room allows one to do it if the therapist can describe what happened, including him/herself, considering the cat inside the patient and the therapist too. To be in the same psychic place as the patient is the better way to decrease his defences. In this way, the caught became a place where many "cats" meet each other.

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