

**ENRIQUE  
PICHON RIVIERE**  
**Pioneer of the Link**



**EDITED BY  
DAVID E. SCHARFF**

**Enrique Pichon Rivière:**

**Pioneer of the Link**

**David E. Scharff, MD, Editor**

Copyright © 2017

e-Book 2017 International Psychotherapy Institute

All Rights Reserved

This e-book contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. This e-book is intended for personal use only. Any unauthorized reprint or use of this material is prohibited. No part of this book may be used in any commercial manner without express permission of the author. Scholarly use of quotations must have proper attribution to the published work. This work may not be deconstructed, reverse engineered or reproduced in any other format.

Created in the United States of America

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">About the Editor and Contributors</a>	5
<a href="#">Introduction</a> David E. Scharff, MD	7
<a href="#">Enrique Pichon Rivière: An Outline of His Principal Ideas</a> Robert Losso, MD <a href="#">Discussion by Lea S. de Setton</a>	10
<a href="#">The Contributions of Enrique Pichon Rivière: Comparisons with his European Contemporaries and with Modern Theory</a> David E. Scharff, MD <a href="#">Comparison with Object Relations</a>	19
<a href="#">Of Links and Bonds: The complex thought and practice of Enrique Pichon Rivière</a> Juan Tubert-Oklender, MD, PhD	28
<a href="#">Enrique Pichon Rivière: His Contributions to Institutional Intervention</a> Joaquín Pichon Rivière <a href="#">Discussion By Lea S. de Setton</a>	35
<a href="#">Epilogue</a> David E. Scharff, MD	44

## About the Editor and Contributors

**Roberto Losso, MD**, is a Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst, a member of the Argentine Psychoanalytical Association and the International Psychoanalytical Association. Consulting Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Buenos Aires. Coordinating Committee, Family and Couple FEPAL (Latin American Psychoanalytic Federation). Clinical Professor of Family and Couple Therapy, John F. Kennedy University. Author, *Family Psychoanalysis: Theoretical and Technical Considerations*. (Buenos Aires, Lumen). Italian version: *Psicoanalisi della famiglia. Percorsi teorico-tecnici*. (Milano, Franco Angeli), and several texts on his personal experience with Pichon Rivière.

**Joaquín Pichon Rivière** is a Social Psychologist and Past President of the Association of Social Psychologists of the Argentina. He is currently Chair of the Ethical Committee of APSRA, and both a didactic and honorary member of the association. He published the first dictionary of Enrique Pichon Rivière's terminology and comments on social psychology, and *Enrique & Arminda: A photographic biography* about Enrique Pichon Rivière and his wife, Arminda Aberastury.

**David E. Scharff, MD**, is Chair of the Board, former Director and Co-Founder of the International Psychotherapy Institute in Washington, DC; Chair of the International Psychoanalytic Association's Committee on Family and Couple Psychoanalysis; Editor and author of more than 30 books, including the work of Ronald Fairbairn; and books on family, couple and individual therapy and analysis. Recent books include *The Interpersonal Unconscious* (with Jill Savege Scharff, Karnac, 2011). He has co-edited books on psychoanalysis in China, and on family and couple psychoanalysis. With Roberto Losso and Lea de S. Setton, he co-edited *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of Enrique*

*Pichon Rivière* (Karnac, 2017).

**Lea S. de Setton, PhD**, is a Member and Training Analyst, International Psychoanalytical Association; Faculty, the International Psychotherapy Institute and Supervising Analyst at the International Institute for Psychoanalytic Training, Washington, DC; former chair of IPI-Panama; faculty member, Doctorate Program, Catholic University (USMA), Panama. Board member, International Association for Family and Couple Psychoanalysis. Psychologist, Psychoanalyst and Psychotherapist in private practice with individuals, couples and families in Panama.

**Juan Tubert-Oklander, MD, PhD**, is a Training and Supervising Psychoanalyst at the Mexican Psychoanalytic Association, and a group analyst, practicing in Mexico City. Full member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association, the International Psychoanalytic Association, and the Group-Analytic Society International. He is author of numerous papers and book chapters published in several languages. His recent book is *The One and the Many: Relational Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis* (Karnac, 2012).

## Introduction

*David E. Scharff, MD*

This book introduces the work of Enrique Pichon Rivière to an English-reading psychoanalytic audience, and then explores some of the many implications and developments of his groundbreaking work. This eBook follows the publication of the first group of articles on and by Enrique Pichon Rivière in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and the first collection of his writings in English as a print book, *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière*. When Roberto Losso introduced many of us at The International Psychotherapy Institute to his work almost 10 years ago, his ideas seemed a revelation. Our Institute is founded on principles of British object relations, particularly the work of Fairbairn, Klein, Winnicott, Bion and Bowlby, along with other British and worldwide contributors who together have woven a rich tapestry that now constitutes a coherent object relations theory. Psychoanalytic object relations theory and practice elaborate on the revolution that happened when Fairbairn and Klein moved psychoanalysis beyond Freud's drive theory and pleasure principle-centered formulations because they realized that what motivates development from the beginning of life is the need to be in relationships. Ground-breaking writers of the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fashioned a quantum leap in our capacity to understand analytically, with revolutions in thinking about the makeup of the psyche and the role of unconscious interaction in development, in everyday life, and in the analytic therapies.

The contributors to this book have each worked over many years to increase intersubjective understanding of the organization of mind and interaction. My own work and that of my colleagues, working often with families,

couples and groups, looked at the way people were mutually influential of each other's psyches. Using chaos theory, for instance, we saw how people could pull each other towards their own kinds of psychic organization, and by making a bond, create a higher level of organization unique to each pair or group.

But it was a revelation for me to learn that Pichon Rivière had been grappling with these issues since the 1940s, and had formulated related revolutionary ideas towards which so many of us had been struggling in the intervening 60 years. Pichon's formulation of "the link", or "el vinculo" in Spanish, as an organization developed by two people in a relationship that exists in the space between them, to which they both contribute, and which in turn acts to organize the psyche of each individual in a pair, a family or a group, put into a concise and powerful term what we had been struggling towards. We could now see that Henry Dicks' formulation of the "shared marital personality", or Stolow and Atwood's "intersubjectivity", or Ogden's "analytic third", or Bowlby's attachment bond, were all examples of such links.

Pichon saw these links as having vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical link joins people with previous and subsequent generations, giving an explanation for intergenerational transmission of personality and of trauma. Horizontal links bind each person to their nuclear families, extended families and the social world.

Among Pichon's other important formulations was the idea of a fundamental illness, a deep-seated depression expressed through diverse symptoms deriving from underlying deprivation, mistreatment or trauma and from family-wide secrets and misunderstanding. He held that patients were ill in the context of their families and groups, that a symptomatic family member was the spokesperson for a family illness and thus was, in a paradoxical way, the strongest member of the family. He was the actual originator both of analytic family therapy years before its growth in the United States, and a founder of group psychotherapy. He began doing group therapy early in parallel with the



development of group analysis in Great Britain, but with no communication with Fuchs or Bion. He understood the Oedipal situation to be both bi-corporal (that is two bodies) and tri-personal psychically because a child has parents who each have a psychic relationship with the other parent, if not in actuality, at least in the mind. He saw that therapy goes on through disrupting a patient's pre-existing organization through the disruption of what the patient brings by interpretation, to produce what he called a new "emergent", which is a result of the interaction of the therapist and the patient, and that therapy is a "spiral process" in which it crosses the same territory at ever deeper levels.

Along the way Pichon Rivière organized therapeutic communities many years before they were discovered in Great Britain, and formulated the idea that psychoanalysis is basically a social psychology, one that must see the person as embedded in the social world.

In this book, we are privileged to have four eminent contributors. From Roberto Losso, we have a detailed version of Pichon Rivière's revolutionary ideas; from Juan Tubert-Oklander, we learn about Pichon's invention of "operative groups"; and we read about the application of these groundbreaking ideas outside of formal psychoanalysis from Pichon's son, Joaquin Pichon Rivière who is himself a social psychologist and consultant. I contribute a paper that compares Pichon's ideas with those of British Object Relations that many readers will find more familiar. Finally, Lea Setton, our colleague in the editing of the first book of Pichon's ideas in English, offers discussions of three of the chapters by reconsidering several of these fundamental ideas.

It's been a great privilege for us to be entrusted with the task of bringing Pichon Rivière's ideas to the English-speaking audience that he deserves. We hope this eBook will be another element in the process of introducing his work to a widening audience of English readers.

## **Enrique Pichon Rivière: An Outline of His Principal Ideas<sup>1</sup>**

*Roberto Losso, MD*

I was fortunate to work with Pichon Rivière for many years. I met him in the 1960s at the First Private School of Dynamic Psychiatry, which he ran and where I began to work as a coordinator of what he called “operative groups”, and where he was my supervisor. Thanks to this experience and further contact with Pichon, I witnessed his openness to the ideas of others, and his insistence on presenting his own formulations as provisional. I appreciated his brilliance, his versatility, and his curiosity about everything human. Each class was a revelation. He continuously surprised us with something new, or with a different or enriching version of something he had already said. He would vividly explain to us his dialectic viewpoint or his idea of “spiral movement,” an idea that plays an important role in his theory of the therapeutic process.

Pichon was a unique, multifaceted figure. His interests ranged from classical to dynamic psychiatry, psychoanalysis, group psychotherapy, family and couple therapy, social psychology, applied psychoanalysis, and more. He was concerned with the connection between art, literature and madness. He wrote studies on the life and work of Isidore Ducasse, Count of Lautréaumont, and on Antonin Artaud and his contacts with the surrealist movement.

He was one of the first to use psychoanalysis to understand psychosis, and the development of the transference in psychotic patients as he applied a psychoanalytic approach to treat psychoses. His ability to connect with these

patients was astonishing. I saw that he was able to achieve significant change in severe cases.

In the 1950s, Pichon introduced his *theory of the link*, which constitutes one of his most important contributions to psychoanalytic theory and practice. In his classes, he insisted that *there is no psyche outside the link*. He emphasized the importance of seeing patients within the family and social context to which they belonged. An oft-stated piece of advice was that we invite into our office everyone who comes with a patient. If the patient was accompanied by one or more family members, neighbors, or friends, they should all come in. And he would add, half-joking, "Including the dog!"

Pichon pointed out that the analytic session was bi-corporal and tri-personal, referring to the constant psychic presence of the third party (or parties) in the space of the relationship even although only two persons were physically present. Some analysts have confused Pichon's "link theory" with other views that ignore the intrapsychic dimension, because they were (and still are) afraid of shifting the field of psychoanalysis from an intrapsychic focus to a relational or interactional world. Pichon held that any intrapsychic focus must also consider the constant influence of the interactional world on the mind.

The concept of link has been used more frequently in psychoanalysis in recent years. Yet we should make clear that for Pichon, links are not simply phenomena occurring between two pre-existing subjects; subjects are *constituted* by links and within links. Links do not develop only *between* subjects but also *inside* each person by virtue of the internalization of external links.

As links are internalized, they are modified and distorted by *needs*, which are also their *motivating foundation*. Here Pichon alludes to human subjects' initial helplessness (*Hilflosigkeit*) and the inability of people to survive outside their links with others. Pichon defines the biopsychological needs of love, contact, protection, warmth, nutrition, and so on. Individuals are born with these and

other needs, which immediately motivate social interaction. Some of these experiences will be frustrating, and others gratifying.

Thus, subjects *are born from links and live in links* throughout their existence. They are “chained” to links, both external interactional ones, and internal psychic ones. Thereby emerges another essential Pichonian concept, namely, *the internal group*, which is in constant dialectic interaction with external groups. The internal group is not static; it is made up of all links and of everything that happens externally and internally. It plays an *internal drama* (drama as action). Pichon uses a metaphor, the *internal field*, to illustrate his notion of the internal group as dynamic and in constant interaction and motion. Pichon developed also the concept of *ecological internalization* [associated to that of hometown (*querencia* or *pago*)]. This notion alludes to subjects' internalization of the environment in which their life develops, highlighting once again the significance of the social environment in the constitution and preservation of identity.

The idea of the group quality of the psyche, together with the internal group/external group dialectic, carries important technical consequences. Adoption of this assumption leads to the necessity of considering the groups to which a person belongs in understanding intrapsychic function.

Pichon advocated a *link psychiatry* that studies pathology not as one of isolated individuals, but as located in links. We can only understand what happens to an individual in terms of that person's external and internal links, that is to say, at both psychosocial and sociodynamic levels. This point is particularly relevant today in view of contemporary psychiatry's tendency to “biologize” mental suffering in claiming that certain chemical and genetic changes constitute the cause principal cause of mental disease.

One of Pichon's most valuable ideas is his reformulation of the theory of instincts (or drives). He revises Freud's (1921) theory of the life and death

instincts by giving it a link dimension. He proposes that instead of instincts we speak of two types of link models, a *good link*, originating in gratifying experiences, and a *bad link*, the product of frustrating experiences. In this way, the *drive*, acquires a link origin, that is, *drive is born from within the link*.

Pichon's theory of the *unique illness*, sometimes the object of simplistic interpretations, has become particularly meaningful now that the tendency toward the biologization of human suffering is so strong. Based on the Freudian theory of complementary series, Pichon reminds us that all suffering begins with a situation of deprivation that, in turn, triggers a depression that may or may not have clinical manifestations. What we consider "mental illnesses" are actually ways of reacting to this underlying depression through using various defense mechanisms that appear in one or more of the three areas of behavioral expression (mind, body, and external world).

His concept of *the pathology of the good object*, or *schizoid depression*, is innovative. Schizoid depression is characterized by a feeling of *being at the mercy of another*. Individuals unconsciously deposit good and idealized aspects of themselves in their objects, which they must then control and fear to lose. This constitutes his theory of the 3 Ds: Depositor, deposited, depository. The depositor carries out the act of depositing mental contents (the deposited) into the mind of another, the depository. The predominant feelings of this schizoid depression about loss of or distance from the good object are *nostalgia* and *being at the mercy* of the depository, who now owns or controls the good object.

I cannot describe here the theory of the single illness in detail, but I believe that it is essential the concept of *structural mobility*. Pichon does not establish a categorical difference among the various psychopathological structures. They are "instrumental and situational for each here-and-now of the interaction process" and depend on the links that are involved in each time and situation. As these are not fixed structures, there are no rigid boundaries between psychoneurosis, psychosis, borderline states, psychosomatic disorders, and the variations in

symptomatic pictures.

One of Pichon's statements quoted by Zito Lema brilliantly summarizes his conception of the subject: "Human individuals are beings of needs, needs that can only be met socially in relationships that determine them. *Subjects are not only related subjects but also produced subjects*, that is, they are the result of the interaction of individuals, groups and classes". (Lemma, 2017) Here, too, Pichon introduces the importance of the social sphere. He taught us to consider not only intrapsychic and interpsychic link dimensions, but the *social* dimension as well.

Another Pichonian idea is that illness emerges as a "solution," an attempt to solve the problem posed when subjects are faced with a discrepancy between their personal aspirations (I would even say the aspirations connected with injunctions originating in certain internalized links) and their ability to fulfill them.

Pichon was one of the first to highlight the need, in many cases, to treat patients with their families. Subjects, he stated, get sick with insecurity, family misunderstanding, and with love – with longing for and lack of love, because this need is not fully met; and with hate, since the family group in which they develop does not allow them to achieve an identity of their own. There is also often insufficient discrimination among its members, which therefore limits the development of individual identity.

Pichon's theory of the *spokesperson* is also relevant. The spokesperson is the subject who expresses the suffering, discomfort, and insecurity of the family group. Illness is thus *a new quality that appears in the family field*. He introduced the concept of *misunderstanding*, which he considered the *basic illness* of the family group. We are always working on misunderstandings that emerge in the group, that is, on the ongoing confrontation between the internal group (internal link models) of each family member, distorted by certain situations that occurred at some point in that person's history, and the external group in the here-and-

now, the present-day family, the family of external reality rather than the internalized one. Family secrets were often the vehicle for this kind of misunderstanding, and, he wrote, that the “ill” or symptomatic family member was paradoxically the strongest member of the family because able to contain the unexpressed and disavowed struggles of the others. Thus the symptoms of one family member conveyed family “secrets” and “spoke” for the illness and dysfunction of the group. When a person falls ill, said Pichon, there is a tendency to segregate that person as the depositary of the group’s anxieties. Family members try to keep him away with the fantasy that his segregation will cause their anxiety to disappear.

The notion of *family mystery* describes what we often perceive in families, namely, that there is a mystery underlying the conflicts they present to us. It is a *conspiracy of silence*. (Today the word family secret is more used). The attempt to confront this “mystery” is experienced as a threat of catastrophe, and therefore the family resists its clarification, through a special way of treating the patient, a way of “taking care” of him that keeps facts hidden and locks the patient in the role of the “ill person.” This behavior constitutes a subtle (or not so subtle) form of segregation.

For Pichon, the corrective task with the family consists in redistributing the group’s anxiety, analyzing misunderstandings, restoring communication networks, reformulating links (I would say by contrasting internal and external links), and restructuring the interplay of roles.

Pichon was fond of soccer, and used to tell us that a family should metaphorically be like a soccer team, where each player has a position on the field (defense, attack, and so on), but those may change depending on the vicissitudes of the game. All the elements of the soccer situation are part of the field including the fans, the referee, and even the ball. The same ought to happen in families. Members must have the necessary plasticity to take over other members’ roles depending on the circumstances of family life, and for this

reason, the consideration of a person as filling different *roles* at different times and in differing circumstances should always be considered.

Pichon was also ahead of his time in introducing the transgenerational dimension through his metaphor of the *cross* and in pointing out the pathogenic role of the *family mystery*. Individuals live on a cross. The vertical arm corresponds to their links with previous generations (transgenerational chain), and the horizontal one to the links with their contemporaries, in the first place, with their family group.

I will end with a few words about Pichon's *Social Psychology*: Pichon's principal book has a subtitle: From "Psychoanalysis to Social Psychology". What did "Social Psychology" mean for him? Pichon wrote in his article "La Psicología Social" (Social Psychology): "The contrast that most surprises analysts in the practice of their task is discovering with every patient that we are not facing an isolated person but an emissary, that is, understanding that an individual as such is not only the main actor of a drama that seeks clarification through analysis, but also the spokesperson of a situation played by the members of a social group (for instance, the individual's family), to whom he has always been committed and whom he has incorporated into his internal world since the very beginning of his life". That is for him Social Psychology.

### Discussion by Lea S. de Setton

It is privilege for us to hear directly from Dr. Roberto Losso, who in turn had privilege of working directly with Pichon Rivière for many years. He appreciates Pichon's brilliance, his curiosity, and his interests in a broad variety of areas such as dynamic psychiatry, psychoanalysis, group psychotherapy, family and couple theory, social psychology and applied psychoanalysis. Pichon was also one of the first to use psychoanalysis to understand psychosis and the development of transference in psychotic patients.



Pichon's *Theory of the Link* refers to how subjects are constituted by *links* and *within links*. Links develop between subjects and inside of them. Links are internalized, modified and distorted by needs, which are their motivating foundation. Here emerges the concept of an *internal group* in constant dialectic interaction with the external group. In a larger sense, the environment is also internalized, an original concept that Pichon called *ecological internalization*.

For Dr. Losso one of Pichon's most important concepts is *structural mobility*. According to Pichon the different psychopathological structures are "instrumental and situational" in the here and now, with no rigid boundaries, and it is noteworthy that their formation and expression include the social dimension.

Pichon was also original in developing his theory in regard to family therapy. He describes how the illness appears in the family field. The spokesperson is considered the strongest member that carries the sufferings of the group. In many of his students and others whose work derives from his, we can hear strong echoes of his groundbreaking "discovery" of this application of psychoanalysis long before its development in North America and Europe.

Pichon referred to the family's basic illness as the misunderstandings that emerge in the confrontation of the internal and external groups, powered by family secrets—often unconsciously known by all family members—and influenced by the transgenerational dimension. For Pichon there is a *mystery* underlying such conflicts, a *conspiracy of silence*.

The therapeutic process with families and groups focuses on redistributing the group's anxiety, work on the misunderstandings, improved communication and help to support individuals inhabit roles in more flexible and interchangeable ways.

I consider the concept of *family misunderstandings* to be very important. For Pichon these coding and decoding process, associated with individuals and

group frameworks, could generate situations of understanding or misunderstandings that led to cascades of difficulty. Such work in family psychoanalytic psychotherapy requires special attention and patience that allows therapists to follow the details of misunderstandings, to name and describe them, and thereby to help re-distribute the anxieties within a family group towards the development of healthier role functioning for each member.

### **FURTHER READING**

The principle reading in English contains seven of Pichon Rivière's writings in translation for the first time:

Losso, R., Setton, L. and Scharff, D., Eds. (2017): *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis. The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière*. London: Karnac

Several other areas are covered in articles of Dr. Losso's previously published in English:

Losso, R. (2017): Pichon Rivière and the theory of the link. In: Scharff, D. & Palacios, E. (ed.) *Family and Couple Psychoanalysis. A global perspective*. London, Karnac, pp. 45-48

Losso, R. (2017): The history of Family and Couple Psychoanalysis in Latin America. In: Scharff, D. & Vorchheimer, M (ed.): *Clinical dialogues in psychoanalysis in Latin America* London, Karnac, pp. 43-48

Losso, R. (2017): Enrique Pichon Rivière. A brilliant trailblazer. In Losso, R., Scharff, D., Setton, L. (ed) : *The Linked Self in Psycho-analysis. The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière*. London, Karnac, pp. 149-158

### **REFERENCES**

Freud, S. (1921): *Group psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. SE 18.

Lemma, Z. V. (2017) The long river of Enrique Pichon Rivière, in *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière*. Losso, R., Setton, L., Scharff, D. Eds. London: Karnac. pp. 211-216

### *Note*

<sup>1</sup> This chapter and Lea Setton's discussion were first presented in the Panel "Enrique Pichon Rivière: Pioneer of the link in psychoanalysis"; 50th International Psychoanalytic Congress, Buenos Aires, July 27, 2017.

## **The Contributions of Enrique Pichon Rivière: Comparisons with his European Contemporaries and with Modern Theory<sup>2</sup>**

*David E. Scharff, MD*

Enrique Pichon Rivière, a pioneer of psychoanalysis, worked and wrote in Argentina in the mid-twentieth century, none of his work was translated into English until recently (Losso, et al., 2017). From the beginning, Pichon Rivière understood the social applications of analytic thinking, centering his ideas on “el vínculo”, generally translated as “the link”, but that could equally be translated as “bond”. The concept that each individual is born into human social links, is shaped by them, and simultaneously contributes to them inextricably ties persons’ inner worlds to the social world of family and society in which they live. Pichon Rivière believed therefore that family analysis, and group and institutional applications of analysis were as important as individual psychoanalysis. Many of the original family and couple therapists from whom our field learned trained with him. Because his work was centered in the analytic writings of Fairbairn and Klein, as well as those of the anthropologist George Herbert Mead and the field theory of Kurt Lewin, his original ideas have important things to teach us today.

Freud and those following him in the first half of the twentieth century postulated that individuals were structured from inside their own constitution through linear development, in which illness constituted fixation at early points of development or regression back down the developmental line. In this model, parents and other influential adults could only shape or disfigure a predestined

form for each child. This model changed fundamentally through the contributions of Fairbairn (1952) and Klein (1975a; 1975b) whose work gave a picture of individual personality taking shape in interaction with important parental figures. Klein's idea of projective identification pictured the child recruiting the parent to hold overwhelming aggression which the child found intolerable inside herself. In a complementary way, Fairbairn described how children introjected experience with their mothers (and others), and then split it into varying categories to build psychic structure. He described this structure vividly as an ego-object internal structure, made up of identifications with external people divided into internal emotional groupings depending on whether the experience being internalised was satisfactory, rejecting, or overly exciting of need.

In Argentina, beginning in the 1940s, Enrique Pichon Rivière (1971, a,b,c,d; 1979; 2016) drew on his knowledge of Fairbairn and Klein, and on the non-analytic sources of K. Lewin for field theory, and G. H. Mead for a socio-anthropological point of view, to make further pioneering contributions which then inspired the next generation of South American psychoanalysts. However, since Pichon Rivière's work was not translated into English, its influence on the mainstream of psychoanalysis remained indirect, seeping into analytic discourse through authors who read Spanish or who studied with him, including Willy and Madeline Baranger, Faimberg, and Kaës. This chapter begins by summarizing some central ideas of Pichon Rivière on whom such authors drew, in order then to outline some comparisons with parallel developments in current psychoanalytic theory.

Pichon Rivière's central idea was that a link (*el vínculo*) was formed by all people in psychological interaction. The link is a superordinate structure formed through speech and interaction in the space between people. It is formed by all partners in interaction, while, in turn, it organises their psyches. So individuals are constituted both by their inherent constitution (as Freud had said) and by constant interaction with others. In this way "otherness" or "alterity" is a constant organising factor because it challenges the continuity of existing psychic

organisation. Every individual is born into links, breathing links in the air as fish swim in water, and at the same time, each person contributes to links, which in turn contribute to the continual re-organisation of that person. Links are expressed in the three areas of "mind, body and interaction" (including speech). They exist in an intermediate area between the internal world and the external world of interaction, organised by both partners of a pair or all members of a group. The link is a shared, mutual construction, which, through reciprocal action, then organises the members of that group. In this way, external relations and internal object relations are formed by the twin pillars of the individual unconscious and social influence.

Links are built on individual needs for love, nurture, safety and knowing. Inside the mind, links are reproduced in the bond between good and bad object relations and the self, in resonance with links in the external world. It seems to me that Pichon drew this formulation of the psyche directly from Fairbairn, but an important and new contribution of Pichon Rivière's formulation of *el vinculo* was to specify how continuing external interaction continually reorganises individuals, not only through unconscious communication—that is introjective and projective identification—but through all external interaction including conscious interaction.

There are two axes of the link: The "vertical axis" joins the generations, both the inheritance of previous generations and history, and the transmission of experience to subsequent generations and the future. The "horizontal axis" joins individuals and families with the social groups around them—extended family, the village, institutions, wider society, and current culture.

The link is expressed through individual action, speech, symptoms, bodily experiences, and dreams, as well as other vehicles through both conscious and unconscious expression and communication. The body is, for Pichon Rivière, a primary location of links, not confined to illness as is often emphasised in contemporary psychosomatic schools.

We can picture links in various ways. Rather than an analogy to a simple chain of linked elements, a more apt image would be chain-link fence, or a series of intertwined elements in dynamic movement. Pichon Rivière's prescient ideas fit best with the formulations of chaos or complexity theory developed in the decades after his death (Gleick, 1987; Scharff & Scharff, 2011). In these formulations, complex systems are characterised like non-linear equations in mathematics, forming non-repeating patterns which may give a sense of pattern-recognition (like that of a person's personality), but the iterations of complex equations do not ever exactly repeat. Think of the similar, but non-repeating, patterns of snowflakes. In this formulation, when two or more complex systems come together, the pattern of the resulting higher order system cannot be predicted from the characteristics of the lower order sub-systems. Such complex systems have unpredictable "emergent properties". For instance, we could not predict the patterns of personality from knowledge of the subsystems of the brain. Systems that demonstrate pattern stuckness do become repetitive and predictable, like an electrically-powered pendulum swinging through the limited patten of a regular arc. Such stuckness characterises mental illness and institutional dysfunction.

Pichon Rivière pictured therapy as a spiral process, circling at deepening levels through the same territory, but with a different cut at each pass through those territories. In this process the "existent" organisation is interrupted by "interpretation", leading to a new "emergent" pattern. Transference exists as a "here-and-now-with-me" because the person of the therapist is organised by and contributes to the therapeutic link. Pichon taught that the oedipal situation is present from the beginning because a third object was always represented in the mind of the mother or analyst, so that bi-corporal relations—that is ones with only two persons present—are nevertheless tri-personal. He also adds a temporal element to the link in seeing that links always evolve over time.

From the beginning, Pichon Rivière saw the individual as located in a family and social context. He held that the family is always central, and that applying

therapy to whole families is a natural application of psychoanalysis. He thought that each individual is organised by an "internal group" in resonance with external groups such as family or working groups. A family becomes ill through "misunderstanding" and attempts to maintain family secrets, and an identified patient is often a "spokesperson" who interrupts the conspiracy of silence about what cannot be said. The identified patient is thus paradoxically the "strongest member of the family", able to hold the anxieties and dread of the whole family group through "symptoms", which stem from the whole of personality and the whole of the family. He also developed the idea of "operative groups" that extend beyond psychoanalytic treatment for application to institutions and social tasks (Pichon Rivière, 1960). With colleagues he founded a school for social psychology that remains one of his chief legacies in Latin America. (See Tubert-Oklander's and J. Pichon Rivière's chapters in this book.)

### Comparison with Object Relations

For analysts more conversant with the work of Bion on links (1967, 1970), it is important to note that Pichon Rivière's use of the term "link" is substantially different. Bion's work refers to an intrapsychic linking of ideas, thoughts and emotions, with an emphasis on the positively joining, or negatively attacking, bonds of love, hate, and knowledge in the mind (symbolised as +L, -L, +H, -H, +K, -K). While Bion's links form a part of Pichon Rivière's *vinculo*, Pichon Rivière's basic unit in the psyche is a bond between good and bad object relations (derived from Fairbairn and Klein), but *el vinculo* is always also in resonance with external relations and therefore alters over time.

Many of the formulations from British and American object relations and intersubjectivists overlap with Pichon Rivière's ideas. Henry Dicks's "joint marital personality" (1967), Bion's "group basic assumptions" (1961), Winnicott's "transitional phenomena" and "transitional or potential space" between inner and outer worlds, across which mother and baby play (1970), are in the territory of Pichon Rivière's link. So, too, is John Bowlby's attachment

theory (1969) that describes specific psychological bonds of attachment between mother and baby. Subsequent research on the transmission of parents' attachment style to their infants constitutes perhaps the most effective validation of the transmission of links between generations (Main, 1995; Main & Solomon, 1990). More recently, Ogden's "analytic third" (2003), the development of concepts of intersubjectivity (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992; Beebe & Lachmann, 2002), and Hopper's work on the social unconscious as an internalisation of the social link (2003) were developed well after Pichon Rivière. None of these authors had knowledge of his work, but with the benefit of now having his work available in English, we can see the overlap of thought.

Many analysts, psychotherapists, and family therapists trained in Argentina were significantly influenced by Pichon Rivière directly. Their writing has introduced his ideas into the English-language literature through the back door. René Kaës in France visited Argentina to learn about the work of Pichon Rivière, and later had his work translated into French. Kaës's work on groups elaborated Pichon Rivière's basic ideas particularly focusing on unconscious alliances and resistances, and the expression of the link in speech, sexuality, symptoms and dreams. Kaës vividly describes how group members form and express links. Willy and Madeline Baranger, who were students of Pichon, built on his idea of the field. Pichon likened the analytic field to the totality of the field in a soccer match. The Barangers elaborated on this concept in which links exist to develop a bi-personal and multi-personal view of fields that analyst and patient create together. Haydée Faimberg (2005) elaborated on the vertical axis of links in her book *The Telescoping of Generations*. And in Argentina, Puget and Berenstein (1989) examined the importance of the inherently alienating effect of the *other* in both interfering with and structuring links in each individual. Jill Scharff and I have recently incorporated Pichon Rivière's *vinculo* into our notion of the interpersonal unconscious, exploring ways that the individual unconscious is subject to and contributes to interpersonal links (Scharff & Scharff, 2011).

Pichon Rivière's *el vinculo* is one of the most powerful concepts that



English-speaking psychoanalysts and therapists have never heard of. His writing presaged many modern developments and was in many ways conceptually more complete. Fortunately, a compendium of his most important writing, along with essays by several psychoanalytic figures which were influenced by, or who knew him, has now been published (Losso, Setton & Scharff, 2017). His work offers a starting point for many of the emergent ideas in psychoanalytic theory and technique today. He deserves to be widely known so that we may finally take full advantage of his legacy.

## REFERENCES

- Baranger, M. & Baranger, W. (2009). *The Work of Confluence: Listening and Interpreting in the Psychoanalytic Field*, ed. L. G. Fiorini. London: Karnac.
- Beebe, B. & Lachmann, F. (2002). *Infant Research and Adult Treatment: Co-Constructing Interactions*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Bion, W. (1961). *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers*. London: Tavistock.
- Bion, W. (1967). *Second Thoughts*. London: Heinemann.
- Bion, W. (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. London: Heinemann.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss, Vol 1: Attachment*. London: Hogarth.
- Dicks, H. V. (1967). *Marital Tensions*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Faimberg, H. (2005). *The Telescoping of Generations*. London and New York, Routledge.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gleick, J. (1987). *Chaos*. New York: Viking.
- Hopper, E. (2003). *The Social Unconscious*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Kaës, R. (2007). *Linking, Alliances, and Shared Space*. London: The International Psychoanalytic Association.
- Klein, M. (1975a). *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Klein, M. (1975b). *Envy and Gratitude and other Works 1946-1963*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Losso, R., Setton, L. and Scharff, D. (2017) *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of*

Enrique Pichon Rivière. London: Karnac.

- Main, M. (1995). Attachment: Overview with implications for clinical work. In: S. Goldberg, R. Muir, & J. Kerr, (Eds.), *Attachment Theory: Social, Developmental and Clinical Perspectives*. (pp. 407-475). Hillsdale NJ: Analytic Press.
- Main, M. & Solomon, J. (1990). Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth Strange Situation. In: M. Greenberg, D. Chichetti, & M. Cummings, (Eds.) *Attachment in Preschool Years*. (pp. 95-124). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ogden, T. (2003). *Subjects of Analysis*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1960). Técnica de los Grupos Operativos (Operative Group Technique). In: *Del Psicoanálisis a la Psicología Social* (Volume II), Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna, 1971, (pp. 269-275). (In collaboration with José Bleger, David Liberman y Edgardo Rolla). Originally in *Acta Neuropsiquiátrica Argentina*, 1960:6.
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1971a). New Problems Facing Psychiatry: Una Nueva Problemática para la psiquiatría. In: *Del psicoanálisis a la psicología social* (Volume I). 1971, pp. 433-455. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna,
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1971b). Some Observations on the Transference in Psychotic Patients (Algunas observaciones sobre la transferencia en los pacientes psicóticos). In: *Del Psicoanálisis a la Psicología Social* (Volume II). 1971, pp. 267-298. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna,
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1971c). Family Groups: An Operative Approach (Grupos familiares: Un enfoque Operativo). In: *Del Psicoanálisis a la Psicología Social* (Volume II). 1971, pp. 202-213. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna.
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1971d). The Treatment of Family Groups: Collective Psychotherapy (Tratamiento de Grupos Familiares: Psicoterapia Colectiva). In: *Del Psicoanálisis a la Psicología Social* (Volume II). 1971, pp. 189-199, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna.
- Pichon Rivière, E. (1979). *Teoría del Vínculo (Theory of the Link)*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.
- Pichon Rivière, E. (2016, *in press*). *Enrique Pichon Rivière: Pioneer of the Link*. R. Losso, L. Setton, & D. E. Scharff. (Eds). London and New York: Karnac.
- Puget, J. & Berenstein, I. (1989). *Psicoanálisis de la pareja matrimonial (Psychoanalysis of the Matrimonial Couple)*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Scharff, D. E. & Scharff, J. S. (2011). *The Interpersonal Unconscious*. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson.
- Stolorow, R. & Atwood, G. (1992). *Contexts of Being: The Intersubjective Foundations of Psychological Life*. Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1951). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In: *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 229-242. London: Hogarth. 1975.

*Note*

<sup>2</sup> This chapter originally appeared in *Family and Couple Psychoanalysis* (2016) 6:2 pp. 153-158, and appears here courtesy of the editor and publisher.

## **Of Links and Bonds The complex thought and practice of Enrique Pichon Rivière<sup>3</sup>**

*Juan Tubert-Oklander*

Enrique Pichon Rivière was a major pioneer of psychoanalysis and group analysis in Argentina and Latin America. Indeed he was *the* initiator of group-analytic practice and thinking in the area, although he never actually used the name, since he referred to his approach to groups as “operative groups”. The term “group analysis” was originally used by Trigant Burrow in the US, and later by S. H. Foulkes in Britain. It has since become the name of the particular approach to the understanding and work with groups, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic derived from Foulkes’s work and developed by his students and members of the Group-Analytic Society he founded in Great Britain. But Pichon Rivière’s operative group theory and practice are so similar to Foulkes’s that I believe it is fair to say that group analysis is a discipline that emerged independently and simultaneously in Britain and Buenos Aires (Tubert-Oklander & Hernández-Tubert, 2004).

We should keep in mind that group analysis is quite different from what is known as “analytic group psychotherapy”. The latter is an application of psychoanalytic theories and techniques, derived from the practice of individual psychoanalysis, to the conduct of treatment of individual patients in groups. Group analysis, on the other hand constructs its own concepts, theories, and techniques from the group-analytic experience, just as psychoanalysis does from the bipersonal psychoanalytic experience. Hence, it is the conduct of human

groups, whether they have a therapeutic or a non-therapeutic goal, by a conductor who strives to keep an analytic attitude vis-à-vis whatever happens in the group, including him or herself as a part of the group, and who intervenes in such ways that may foster a better use of the resources of the group and its members in their common effort to attain whatever goal they may have identified.

As group analysis is based on the assumption that the relational and social nature of human beings is primary, it must necessarily also include and make use of all knowledge and theories of the social and human sciences that appear to be germane to understanding the group-analytic experience.

Group analysis is not restricted to its use as a method of psychotherapy. It can and is regularly applied to other kinds of group goals, such as learning, experience, reflection on a common practice, family life, institutional function or social life in general. This is what Pichon Rivière (1971; Losso et al, 2017) developed extensively in his conception and practice of operative groups. A therapeutic group was, for him, just an operative group whose common task is to achieve the healing of its members.

Pichon Rivière made no difference in his approach to human affairs between *intra*-personal, *inter*-personal, and *trans*-personal mental processes. Hence he wrote, "One cannot think in terms of a distinction between the individual and society. It is an abstraction, a reductionism that we cannot accept" (Pichon Rivière, 1979, p. 61, my translation). It was absolutely natural for his thinking and practice to flow effortlessly from individual conflicts to interpersonal relations and to social, cultural, and political processes, both in the present and past, including personal and family history, and in the history of a social group, a community, a nation, or a race. When working with groups, he usually interpreted in two different directions: a *vertical interpretation*, in terms of a specific member's history, dynamics, and experience, and a *horizontal interpretation*, which conceived of the individual member's utterances,

expressions, and behavior as constituting manifestations of the whole group in the context of its present situation. His was therefore a holistic conception, which included the *field* concept, which he took from Kurt Lewin, a *dramatic* model, derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, and his own concept of the group's dynamics and evolution as a *spiral dialectic process*.

All this led him to formulate a novel theoretical development, which is what he called *Teoría del vínculo* (Pichon Rivière, 1979). *Vínculo* is a Spanish word which means "link", "tie", "bond", or "relation". It variously refers to physical, logical, interpersonal, emotional, psychosocial, and legal connections. Pichon Rivière's concept has been translated alternatively as "link" or "bond". Nowadays the preferred English translation seems to be "link", although "bond" is probably nearer in its connotations to Pichon Rivière's Spanish-language concept.

So, what is this link (bond)? The author used the concept to refer to a dynamic structure that included: 1) a *subject*, 2) his or her *object* (which is really another subject), 3) the *tie* or *relation* between them, and 4) the whole group, social, political, cultural, historical, physical, and ecological *context* in which it takes place. As I have said before, this is a holistic field and process theory whose indebtedness to Kurt Lewin and Harry Stack Sullivan is quite obvious.

Such an approach calls for a revamping of psychoanalytic theory, since it discards Freud's original psychoanalytic unilateral emphasis on "internal" processes, which are set in motion by organic tensions in search of a discharge—a position still often invoked as a group of tenets that cannot be challenged. In Pichon Rivière's thought, the concept of "instinctual drives" is to be replaced by that of the *link* or *bond*. The link includes, but is not restricted to what we know as "object relations". Hence, he writes, "In psychoanalytic theory, we are used to utilizing the notion of object relations, but the notion of the link is much more concrete. The object relation is the inner structure of the link" (1979, p. 35, my translation). There are two psychological fields in the link: there is an *inner field* and an *outer field*—and here "field" does not only have physical or dynamic

connotations, but is also, metaphorically, like those of a football field: a space for groups to play. So, there are internal and external objects, and an internal and an external group, as well as an internal and an external aspect of the link.

The relation between what we usually conceive of as “internal” and as “external” is constant, mobile, and dialectic. There is fluid interchange between the two fields, which helps to establish the differentiation between the inside and the outside, while at the same time maintaining deep continuity between them. Hence, individual and society form an indissoluble unit, a single dynamic field, because we all carry society within us and social processes include the contribution of the personal experiences of all members of collective entities.

Consequently, in psychoanalysis and group analysis we are not only studying the inner dynamics of individual personalities, but always and inextricably also those of an interactional and transpersonal field. This is the true specific object of psychological research. From this point of view, psychoanalytic inquiry is unavoidably group-analytic, even if there are only two people present.

Obviously such perspective does not only apply to our analytic work with groups and to our understanding of wider social systems, but also has consequences for the psychoanalytic inquiry of individual lives. This was shown by Pichon Rivière in a brief article, written in 1965, on the life and work of Enrique Santos Discépolo, the Argentine writer of the lyrics of Argentina’s most famous tangos (Pichon Rivière, 1965). This text has not been translated into English, but even if it were, it would be almost incomprehensible for a foreign reader. Indeed, even younger generation Argentinians, who are no longer familiar with the many references to the socio-political history of their country in the first half of the 20th Century, would find it hard to follow his analysis.

A few years ago, I used the case of Discépolo to illustrate Pichon Rivière’s particular style of interpretation, which blended seamlessly personal and family history with the social and political history of a community and country, for a

chapter for an English language book on the social unconscious (Tubert-Oklander, 2011). I found it necessary to review almost 100 years of Argentine history to ensure that Pichon Rivière's analysis could make sense to readers from other countries. I had to make explicit the many references the author had left implicit, because he assumed—quite erroneously, I believe—that the readers would be familiar with them.

The words of the tangos written by Discépolo, so painful and disenchanted, can be well explained by connecting them to his own upbringing as an orphan from an early age. He was five when his father died; less than nine when he lost his mother, so he grew under the supervision of his elder brother Armando, who was himself to become a famous playwright and stage director. All this turned him into a melancholic and withdrawn character. But Pichon Rivière's analysis went further and deeper. The people known as the Discepolos had been part of a migratory wave from Italy and Spain, fostered by the Argentine government in order for respectable Europeans to replace the native mestizo population the government despised. These humble peasants and artisans came to South America with the fantasy of becoming rich and then returning to their countries as respectable gentlemen—a dream that was known as “doing America”. This almost never happened. The migrants and their children remained frustrated, dreaming of their lost home, a situation that brought about the melancholic, nostalgic traits of the Argentine character. All this, Pichon wrote, was clearly expressed in the disenchantment and bitterness of the tango, which was then to become Argentina's national music.

Argentina's national frustration and disenchantment went even deeper as a result of a long history of government run by elites that exploited and impoverished the bulk of the population. One of the most popular presidents, Hipólito Yrigoyen, strove to democratize the country and respond to popular needs. However, he turned out to be a weak leader and was eventually deposed by a military coup, opening the way for a new series of repressive governments. All this happened in the context of the great economic crisis of the thirties.



Some of Discepolo's songs were straightforward criticisms of the venal and corrupt society in which he lived. Others told of disappointed loves that ended tragically in betrayal and abandonment. All of them expressed the deep feelings of the Argentine people. This, wrote Pichon, was the secret of the songwriter's success, and he was fully aware of it when he wrote,

A song is a piece of my life, a suit that is looking for a body that fits it well. The more bodies there are for that suit, the greater will be the success of the song, since if everybody sings it, it is a signal that all of them are living it, feeling it, that it suits them well. [Discépolo, quoted by Diez, 2010, my translation]

This is a clear example of Pichon Rivière's interpretative thought, which blends individual and family history with social, cultural, political, and other contextual facts and narratives, to yield a deep, dynamic and nuanced understanding of individuals, relationships, groups, families, institutions, and society at large.

As you can see, Pichon Rivière's Theory of the Link or Bond is an essential precursor, not only of present-day group analysis, but also of many novel developments in contemporary psychoanalysis, such as intersubjectivity, relationality, and wider psycho-social approaches.

Now that a selection of his writings has been translated, presented, and commented upon in the book edited and introduced by Roberto Losso, Lea Setton, and David Scharff, *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière* (2017), it is to be expected that new interest in his contributions will emerge in the English-speaking psychoanalytic world, as has already happened in France, where some of his writing has been translated and published through the effort and supervision of René Kaës (1994).

## REFERENCES

Kaës, R. (1994). Preface to *Psychanalyse et psychologie sociale: Hommage à Enrique Pichon Rivière* [Psychoanalysis and Social Psychology: A Tribute to Enrique Pichon Rivière] *Revue de psychothérapie psychanalytique de groupe*, 23, Paris.

Losso, R.; Setton, Lea S. de & Scharff, D. E. (eds.) (2017). *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière*. London: Karnac.

Pichon Rivière, E. (1965). *Discépolo: un cronista de su tiempo* [Discépolo: A chronicler of his time]. In Pichon Rivière (1971), pp. 161-168.

Pichon Rivière, E. (1971). *El proceso grupal. Del psicoanálisis a la psicología social (I)* [The group process: From psychoanalysis to social psychology (I)]. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.

Pichon Rivière, E. (1979). *Teoría del vínculo* [Theory of the bond]. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.

Tubert-Oklander, J. (2011). Enrique Pichon Rivière: The social unconscious in the Latin-American tradition of group analysis. In Hopper, E. & Weinberg, H. (eds.), *The Social Unconscious in Persons, Groups and Societies—Volume I: Mainly Theory* (pp. 45–67). London: Karnac.

Tubert-Oklander, J. & Hernández de Tubert, R (2004). *Operative Groups: The Latin-American Approach to Group Analysis*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

#### Note

<sup>3</sup> This chapter and Lea Setton's discussion were first presented in the Panel "Enrique Pichon Rivière: Pioneer of the link in psychoanalysis"; 50th International Psychoanalytic Congress, Buenos Aires, July 27, 2017.

## **Enrique Pichon Rivière: His Contributions to Institutional Intervention<sup>4</sup>**

*Joaquin Pichon Rivière*

Our consulting firm and our colleagues in Argentina carry out psychosocial interventions in different kind of organizations such as private, governmental, non-governmental businesses and agencies, trade unions, and those institutions created in communities for urgent situations that arise from emergencies such as floods, family violence, addiction, and unemployment.

The wide scope of these interventions encompass those addressed by the Argentinean Institute of Social Studies (IADES), which was founded by my father, Enrique Pichon Rivière, in 1955. This application of Pichon's work will be relatively unfamiliar to clinical psychoanalysts, but was close to his heart. Currently, our consultancy considers the theoretical framework of Pichon Rivière's link theory as a central strategic and tactical resource for research and intervention in our field work. This includes the CROS structure (Conceptual, Referential and Operational Schema; or ECRO in Spanish) and the role of operative groups. The CROS structure is a well-articulated framework that we continue to use as our foundation.

Prior to intervention in a field, we consider relevant criteria and the selection of various techniques which may be relevant, such as: in-depth interviews, operative groups, multitasking meetings and plenary sessions, the search for emerging insights stimulated by the information we gather, thematic triggers and verbatim group transcripts that allow us to conduct analysis of the

group or institution at varying levels.

We consider these levels to include:

1. Psychosocial analysis of individuals and their environment.
2. Dynamic social analysis of the group and its environment.
3. Institutional analysis in both its formal and dynamic structures.
4. The analysis of the institution and the individual.

In considering these areas, we aim to clarify what the individual signifies for a specific institution, including the symbolic dimensions that they experience, such as “the company”, “the job”, “the team”, “the family” and “the money”. The research and the institutional analysis, prior to any intervention, enables us to determine possible reasons for “ruptures” in the “system”, such as dialectic pairs (individual–institution, individual–group, inside–outside) and to propose a course of action to address the resistance to change.

Such analysis produces a great quantity of knowledge and content, which is then incorporated into ongoing operative groups as a way of promoting task-learning. Delay, ambiguity, communicational defects and contradictory commands, among other things, are points at which resistance emerges from within institutions to hinder a group’s work.

Basing our thinking on the link theory, we take into consideration that in any triangular situation, every link is bi-corporal and tri-personal. This means that there is always an internalized third person in any dyad, a third who often disrupts communication, and thereby functions as what is know as “noise” in communication theory. Guided by the theory of the link, we tackle the dynamics between social structure and configurations of the individual internal world.

The internal group is based on internalized bonds, starting with the family group and continuing with the subsequent groups to which the individual is

related. This internal group determines an individual's adaptation to every new experience.

We take our guidance from two aspects of Pichon's CROS: one supra-structural, and the other, infra-structural. The supra-structural aspect is shaped by conceptual elements of the model. The infra-structural aspect is defined by motivational and emotional elements that are based on the individual's everyday experience. It is a model through which the construction we make will enrich understanding of facts we encounter, and, by analogy, helps us understand other similar facts. In the group, elaboration of a common frame of reference takes priority. This is a basic requirement for establishing communication that will follow the messages decoded by we work to decode through affinity or coincidence with the referential schemes of the person who speaks and the persons who receive the messages. Every member contributes a personal referential scheme to the group. Then, on the basis of common denominators of these systems, a complex pattern gradually comes to light in CROS groups.

This complex process aims to help individuals achieve an active adaptation to reality, especially enabling them to assume new roles with greater responsibility as they surrender the limitations of their earlier and generally more stereotyped roles that would be inadequate for the emergence of roles more appropriate for the "here and now" of group evolution. Basic feelings and anxieties about belonging, cooperation and appropriateness of behavior arise in every human group. The maturation and resolution of such concerns interacts support enhanced achievement of increased productivity.

During group process of any kind, two primal fears tend to emerge: fear of the loss and fear of being attacked (Pichon Rivière 2017c). The first is the fear of losing what they already have while in the situation of learning—a fear of losing the knowledge they had before this new learning. The second is fear of the unknown as dangerous because it is unknown. Pichon taught that fear of loss characterizes depressive anxiety, while fear of being attacked and damaged

belongs to paranoid anxiety.

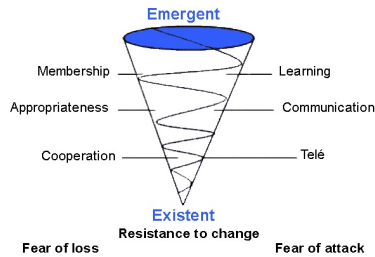
These are common situations we face during institutional interventions, for example, while consulting within a company going through changes related to new industrial procedures affecting its workers; or during the merger of two companies with different cultures; or in a non-governmental organization that faces changes in legal or political context.

The interventions with the operative group help to achieve:

1. An active adaptation to reality.
2. The possibility for group members to assume new roles.
3. The ability for members to carry greater responsibility.
4. Lessening of stereotyped roles that impede adaptation to the “here and now” of the task.

At the level of the group, the operative group examines and seeks to improve impediments to members' security and ability to cooperate and function together in ways appropriate to the generation of the kind of relative harmony and cooperation necessary to greater productivity.

In order to understand what strategies best support the specific tasks , we need analysis of the tasks the group is attempting to carry out. Consultants to such situations need a systematized way of analyzing intervention strategies. Enrique Pichon Rivière developed tools of analysis that belong, as a group, to his “inverted cone” scheme (2017c) . In the lower part of the cone we can see the basic fears of each member of a group: fear of attack and fear of loss. “Illness” (or group dysfunction) is at the base of the cone. “The project of the group and of group members, symbolizing the “health” of the group, appears at the top.



Let us consider six categories of analysis that we should consider:

1. **Membership:** Membership and belonging indicate a higher or lower degree of identification with the task. Membership is measured by the degree of responsibility with which a member or the group assumes its task.
2. **Cooperation:** Here we look at how the group establishes the possibility of joining efforts through development of differentiated and complementary roles. Cooperation is measured in the degree of efficacy while working at the task.
3. **Appropriateness:** This is the capacity for focusing on a task. It is measured by assessing the group's degree of productivity.
4. **Communication:** Here we examine different methods of connecting and of group short-circuits that generate misunderstanding in coding and decoding of messages.
5. **Learning:** Learning develops from the contribution each member makes and develops from new information and evolving feelings. Distress during learning determines resistance to change and to dealing with basic fears.
6. **Telé\*:** Telé, the attraction or rejection that each member of a group feels at first sight, is a reuniting in external relationships, with objects of members' internal worlds. When such personal links are positive, they improve group collaboration; when they are negative, they disrupt.

Operative groups take advantage of both vertical and horizontal links in order to promote an integration, a “unity of operation”. In this process, just as in the process that Pichon described for psychotherapeutic action, the current operating mode of a group forms the “Existent” or even pre-existing way of doing things. Then “Interpretation” serves to disrupt that pattern, in order to introduce disturbing elements that pave the way for something new, the “Emergent”. The “existent” is constituted by everything that is present in the field, embracing explicit and implicit elements. “Interpretation” turns the implicit into something explicit leading the way for the “Emergent”, the new situation which appears to take the place of the previous one. In this way, the “emergent” is structured as “the encounter of the “existent” and the disruptive “interpretation”.

It seems important for me to say that these operative groups in institutions are not based on a therapeutic contract, even if good implementation may produce therapeutic effects at individual and group levels. However that may be, the defining element is the fidelity to the task that aims to help the group with its operational or learning task, not with personal therapy. Therefore, an operative group’s work team develops strategies with the objective of helping the group make qualitative leaps towards implementing new projects or improving their capacity to carry out existing projects. I should also note that we regularly work with interdisciplinary teams that are likely to include not psychoanalysts, but anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists, psychologists, social workers and social psychologists.

### Discussion By Lea S. de Setton

I find it most interesting to hear about the ways in which Joaquin Pichon Rivière has continued the work of his father through a consulting enterprise that conducts interventions in so many types of organizations. In his chapter, we get to read about his use of a theoretical frame based on Pichon’s theory of link, the CROS structure, and the operative group as important devices in his work in the field.



His work is done in widely differing levels: psycho-social, socio-dynamic and institutional. His analysis helps to clarify what the institution represents to the persons who work in it, including areas less familiar to the clinical psychoanalyst or psychotherapist, such as daily work, team work, family and money.

His investigations may be analogous to the way an analytic therapist consults to and works with patients, because he looks for causes of the “fractures” in their system. And he suggests that the best way to intervene and work with the resistance to change is through interpretations that disrupt the “existent”, that which represents the patterns of doing business that warrant improvement.

Joaquin Pichon Rivière and his colleagues approach the dynamics between the social structure and internal world of group members through the elaboration of a common conceptual, referential and operational schema (CROS) in order to establish better communication and enhanced function. His goal is to help the members adapt to reality, accept new roles with more responsibility, and to decrease the use of stereotyped and maladaptive roles. In the process, learning develops from the contributions of each member of such groups, which can be blocked by resistance to change.

Although these ways of working are analogous to the ways that psychoanalytic therapists work with an individual or family who see help, there are important expansions of focus and method which cannot be ignored.

I would like to emphasize that one of the important concepts Joaquin and his team work with is the inverted cone. This part of the theory of operative groups describes a path that begins with the explicit, but then leads to those things which are the implicit dimension of groups and their dynamic functioning. The explicit emerges during the meetings between the group and the consulting team. The implicit underlying organization only emerges through the penetrating analysis that the team conducts in the course of group work. It is through the

consultants' focus on issues of cooperation, belonging, and pertinence to the group task, that they are able to enhance group communication and learning, and overall function. This focus on group effectiveness is quite different from that of a clinical psychoanalytic task, and can result in constructive development of organizations.

## REFERENCES

Most of the ideas of Pichon Rivière cited here, and that are now available in English, can be found in *The Linked Self in Psychoanalysis: The Pioneering Work of Enrique Pichon Rivière, 2017*, edited by Roberto Losso, Lea de Setton and David Scharff, London, Karnac.

The major source of Pichon's ideas, much of which was written down by Pichon's students rather than by Pichon himself, is included in:

Pichon Rivière, E. (1971). *Del psicoanálisis a la psicología social (Vols I & II)*. [From *Psychoanalysis to Social Psychology, Volumes I & II*]. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Galerna.

These volumes include writing on the theory of the link; the CROS (ECRO in Spanish); operative groups and the treatment of family groups.

The concept of the group spokesperson is described in:

Pichon Rivière, E. (1978). El concepto de portavoz. (The concept of the spokesman. In *Temas de Psicología Social*, 2: 11–20.

### Note

<sup>4</sup> This chapter and Lea Setton's discussion were first presented in the Panel "Enrique Pichon Rivière: Pioneer of the link in psychoanalysis"; 50th International Psychoanalytic Congress, Buenos Aires, July 27, 2017.

\* "The tele factor was defined by J.L. Moreno as a universal and basic phenomenon that manifests itself in human bonds as an energy of attraction, rejection or indifference towards others, giving evidence not only of the ubiquitous nature of interpersonal communication, but also of the faculty that people possess to communicate emotion at a distance, inducing them to establish positive, negative or indifferent relationships.

For Moreno, tele is "the smallest unit of affection transmitted from one individual to

another in both directions". In this sense it can be seen as a complete communication quantum, with emission and return reception of messages.

Tele implies feelings of attraction, rejection or indifference based on everything that each of us can feel and / or perceive of the characteristics and real qualities of the other. And vice versa, of course: It includes everything that another can feel or perceive about us.

So we say that we have positive tele with the people we prefer or with whom we are sympathetic, and that we have negative tele with people who cause us discomfort or to feel rejection. Often these feelings are reciprocated."

## Epilogue

There is a great deal more to be said concerning the seminal work of Enrique Pichon Rivière. In summarizing his work and his words, things are inevitably left out or given meanings that others of his disciples and followers would interpret differently. We welcome those differences because they are the stuff through which creativity follows such a seminal work of genius. For instance the work of René Kaës has fleshed out the psychoanalytic meaning of many of Pichon's ideas, including the role of "spokesperson" in groups and families. Joaquin Pichon Rivière's chapter has begun to sketch out how Pichon's original ideas about operative groups have opened up a whole field of work in social psychology, and therefore extended the reach of psychoanalytic thinking enormously.

Pichon Rivière's ideas also bring a great deal to group analysis, a field that has been fully joined by Juan Tubert-Oklander in this book, and is highly developed in its own literature. However, because so few practitioners of group analysis have been familiar with Pichon's ideas, it is now important to see how his ideas can inform that field.

Inside psychoanalysis itself, Pichon made clear from the beginning of his writing that he felt psychoanalysis should be applied equally to families and groups, just as much as to individual patients. And he thought that even when working with individual patients, the analyst should have the patient's family in mind. It was his original idea of the "field" in which psychoanalytic encounters take place that led to the groundbreaking work of Willy and Madeline Barranger, who were his students. I have felt that it is hard to understand the work on the analytic field without including Pichon's original and originating ideas, including his contention that the most useful metaphor for the field was the soccer field

and the game of soccer (or football for those outside of North America for whom this is the worldwide game.)

I believe that it is always important to go back, from time to time, to the original sources of any field of human endeavor. Thus in philosophy we return to Plato and Aristotle, and drama we return periodically to the Greeks. In psychoanalysis we return to Freud. This is not to say that we want to be captured by the limitations of the originators of our fields, but to say that embedded in their original ideas there is the potential for new thinking that is often are overlooked by the focus of subsequent contributors. Thus Freud's original ideas on the role of trauma in the development of mind was ignored for many years, only to reemerge as prescient concerning the trauma that has always played a role in the development of many of our patients. It is with this untapped potential in mind that my colleagues and I have worked to bring Pichon's ideas to the attention of the psychoanalytic community and to students of psychoanalysis worldwide. We hope that this volume will serve to inspire you to learn more about the seminal work of Enrique Pichon Rivière.

David E. Scharff, MD  
Washington, DC  
October, 2017

Share this Book with your Friends!

