APPEARANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYNDROME OF PSYCHIC AUTOMATISM IN SCHIZOPHRENIA

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The syndrome of psychic automatism (syndrome of Кандык-Клерамбault) is one of the basic hallucination-paranoid syndromes. V. Kandinsky (1885) and G. de Clerambault (1927) have rendered great services to its clinical investigation and differentiation.

The aim of the present work is to study some aspects of the appearance and development of the syndrome of psychic automatism in schizophrenia.

We studied clinically and by using of specially elaborated file-card a total of 180 schizophrenia patients hospitalized in the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology of Medical University, Varna, during the period from 1983 till 1987. There were 84 males and 96 females, 120 patients were aged between 18 and 45 years and the rest 60 - between 46 and 65 years. The duration of the psychosis was up to 1 year in 48 cases, between 2 and 3 years - in 53 cases, between 4 and 10 - in 67 cases and more that 10 years - in 12 cases. The clinical analysis of the examined contingent enabled to outline three types of the appearance and development of the syndrome of the psychic automatism, two of them basic forms - acute one and continuous one and one of them intermediate - subacute. On the other hand, it was possible to demonstrate two variants in the clinical picture of the acute form corresponding to the differences of the developmental mechanisms and the clinical structure of the acute schizophrenic psychosis.

In the first variant, occurring more frequently, the syndrome of psychic automatism appeared acutely on the 7th - 9th day after psychosis onset commonly with phenomena of the so-called small automatism (G. de Clerambault's petit automatisme), or acutely appearing "somatopsychic depersonalization" (A.K. Анфрие в, 1969, Т.Ф. Папагопулос, 1975). The further formation of the syndrome of psychic automatism has two main directions in its course: in some cases crazy ideas of influence dominate but in other cases pseudohallucinatory disorders increase. When pseudohallucinatory disturbances predominate the clinical picture is occupied by an expanded verbal pseudohallucinosis with an outlined fantastic content. The duration of the syndrome of psychic automatism is between 1...
and 3 months when the first variant is concerned.

With the second variant the syndrome of psychic automatism appears acutely on the 2nd - 4th day after psychosis onset without phenomena of the so-called small automatism (petit automatisme). The crazy ideas of influence come to the fore appearing simultaneously with the symptoms of the psychic automatism. The duration of the syndrome of psychic automatism is between 1 and 3 weeks when the second variant is concerned. The syndrome of psychic automatism with schizophrenia with continuous course was closest related to paranoid craziness which became very often rather systematized. The syndrome appearance and display occurred gradually, during months and years, enriching itself continuously by addition of other new symptoms. In some patients there was at last an experience of complete alienation of all the mental activities entirely subordinate to manias of influence and persecution.

The syndrome of psychic automatism with the subacute (intermediate) form of schizophrenia course advanced for about 3-5 weeks. At the beginning, on the background of anxiety-fear suspense single syndrome elements originated combined with fragmentary paranoid manias. No definite succession of symptom appearance could be established; they occurred at almost one and the same time and became manifested to a certain extent already in the first few weeks of the psychosis without any particular further development. After overcoming of the paroxysm rudimentary symptomatics within the psychic automatism (most frequently rudimentary auditory pseudohallucinations) often retained.

We conclude that the typology of the appearance and development of the syndrome of psychic automatism revealed by us reflects in total the clinical peculiarities of the single forms of schizophrenia course and provides data about the extent of expressiveness and progradience of the pathological process. Therefore, it has also a relative therapeutic and prognostic importance which is of an essential practical interest.