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Editorial

Phew! A week ago (in the first week of October) we had only two pieces for this issue and it seemed that we would be unable to publish in December. We avoided this only because there was an MC meeting last weekend, a few more contributions emerged from this meeting, and also because Paula and I have written pieces for this issue.

In the MC meeting we collectively wondered if there might be some confusion between the three major forums of communication the Society hosts: the Journal, Contexts, and the Forum. What to send to whom? This discussion was part of an ongoing dialogue about how we involve, and communicate with, our membership. Are you interested? Do we seem remote? Is sharing with other members too anxiety provoking? Are you too busy? Please communicate with us and let us know.

But it is clear that we, the editors, need to do more work to involve you. Please expect an email to land in your in-box any day soon requesting a contribution! (how will you respond?)

Terry Birchmore

About Contexts, let's talk about something! We feel we need to think and to discuss what is happening. The rule, is that we don't have people spontaneously sending texts for publishing. Usually we need to ask for articles and reports. Why is this happening?

Is Contexts a newsletter that GAS people need, or is something that GAS somehow need, just because...? What needs to be changed? What does it mean?

Curiously, one of the themes of this issue's articles, is the container function of the group versus destructivity. So, what can we contain and share through Contexts?

Paula Carvalho

President's Page

The year 2009 is coming to an end and I will begin with wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year.

It has been a good year for the Group Analytic Society. Our membership has increased, not bad at a time where the dynamic psychotherapies are under pressure. Another very encouraging sign is that there were more than 50,000 articles downloaded from the Journal of Group Analysis online in 2008. Since 2006 this has risen by 121%. However, in some countries we still miss the official recognition compared to CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) and IPT (interpersonal therapy) and this is worrying.

I am writing this in early October, and when you read it the Autumn Workshop "Mentalizing the Matrix" will be over. But the fact that it was fully subscribed long before it was to take place and had a long waiting list has renewed the idea of repeating it elsewhere. I remember we did so with the Siblings Workshop some years ago, first in the North of the UK and later in Australia and Denmark. It will of course depend on who can host the workshop and if the present staff have the time and energy to repeat it.

It has taken some time but now finally we have the pleasure to inform you that the 15th European Symposium in Group Analysis will take place at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, London, UK, 29th August–2nd September 2011 inclusive.

St Mary's is situated on the outskirts of London near sights like Kew Garden, Hampton Court Palace, Windsor Castle and is close to the river Thames with good connections to central London. But first of all it offers a campus big enough to take us all with many possibilities for meeting and talking, for renewing old friendships and discovering new ones, as well as student accommodation and hotels nearby.

As I informed you in the previous issue of Contexts Jane Campbell will give the next Foulkes Lecture on Friday 14th May, 2010 with the title "'The Islands of the Blest': Group Analysts and their Groups". Jane Campbell is widely known for her teaching and writing and involvement with committees and societies on an International level, but not least for her magnificent grip of poetry and literature.

In August the International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP) held their 17th Congress in Rome with

the title “Groups in a Time of Conflict”. It was a very successful congress both in terms of numbers and content. There were indeed many very good papers and workshops, but one event made a special impression on me and many others and that was to meet Dr. James Anthony, for many years living in USA, who was co-author with Foulkes of “Group Psychotherapy” 1957. He was invited for the Group Analytic Section Meeting. He told about his time at Northfield, his analysis with Foulkes and his later friendship with him in an absolutely lively, warm and humorous way. It was moving.

It also reminded people that Foulkes was a co-founder of IAGP together with Moreno. In the beginning IAGP was an umbrella organisation for Psychodrama and Group Analysis but has nowadays other sections as well such as a family section and an organisational section.

Since Kevin Power took over the chairmanship of the 2011 Symposium we have been in need of a new Honorary Treasurer. Fortunately Alfred Garwood has accepted this position and we wish him luck with the new job.

Again I have the sad duty to inform you that another senior member, Olov Dahlin, from Sweden has died. Olov Dahlin had just been made an Honorary Member of the Group Analytic Society for his longstanding contribution to Group Analysis.

Gerda Winther
President, GAS

Welcome to New Members

Mrs Lindy Goldkorn	Full Member	UK
Ms Ann Hoile	Full Member	UK
Dr Kristin Lund	Full Member	Norway
Mr Marcus Page	Full Member	UK
Dr Edi Gatti Pertegato	Full Member	Italy
Ms Irini Tendall	Student Member	UK
Dr Linde Wotton	Student Member	UK

Deceased Members

We would welcome writings in memory of the any deceased members and in recognition of their contribution to Group Analysis.

Be a Contexts Writer!

Contexts welcomes contributions from members on a variety of topics:

- Have you run or attended a group-analytic workshop?
- Are you involved in a group-analytic project that others might want to learn about?
- Would you like to share your ideas or professional concerns with a wide range of colleagues?

If so, send us an article for publication by post, e-mail, or fax. Articles submitted for publication should be between 500 and 2,500 words long, or between one and five pages.

Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

The deadline for each issue of Contexts is about three months before the publication of a specific issue. The deadline for publication in the June issue, for example, will therefore be early March.

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**Reflections upon the EGATIN Study Day
(24th–25th April 2009) from a
Candidate Perspective**

**Christiane Buck and Nneka Chidolue-Hoppe,
IGA Heidelberg**

The topic of this year's EGATIN Study Day was "From Fear to Curiosity".

Upon being asked to write a review of the conference for this and a further journal, the very request itself gave rise to considerable ambivalence, honouring the significance of the topic. The first of a wide range of affects which we felt was pride – at already entering into the annals of group analysis with a publication despite being candidates. At the same time, a certain degree of fear arose connected with early feelings of shame – would we be up to fulfilling this "honourable task", would we perhaps even compromise ourselves with our "immature" lines of thought? We soon became aware of an inner and outer pressure – is it even possible to turn down such an offer?

It was at a relatively late stage and with great hesitation that curiosity reared its head – what would it be like to advance into this new world? To suddenly be so “important”? How would our perspective and the reflection process be modified and shaped by reviewing the conference? This curiosity was followed by the pleasant and comforting sense that we would have each other and that neither of us had been left alone to manage the task. We would be able and certain to exchange ideas with one another. Despite our ambivalence, we thus decided to accept the offer.

On a warm, summery, beautifully radiant Friday afternoon, we found ourselves walking through the busy old town in the direction of Schmitthennerhaus in Heiligegeiststrasse. Upon entering the courtyard through a wide-open gate and glimpsing the beautiful, secluded, late-baroque-period mansion, we were both impressed and surprised, first with respect to the study-day location, and second with respect to the long queue which had already formed in front of the registration desk almost one hour before the conference was due to begin. We sensed a spreading concern that we would not know anybody and would not understand anything; after all, it was our very first EGATIN meeting and the conference language was supposed to be English. Upon approaching the queue we recognized – to our relief – a few familiar faces of members of our institute who greeted us in an open and friendly manner. Nonetheless, it still all felt rather strange; we seemed, after all, to be the only candidates as far as the eye could see.

At the very onset of the conference and much to our delight, Beate Rasper provided considerable encouragement to all attendees by friendly referring to the fact that the traditional language in which the conference is conducted is “bad English”. This information clearly led – not only in our case – to a certain degree of relief. Conference visitors turned to one another and the room filled with murmuring and laughter. In the first of the afternoon lectures, Angela Schmidt-Bernhardt presented a series of new group-analytic training methods from the IGA Heidelberg. In particular the very new method of creative writing as well as the method of scenic understanding based on pictorial material according to Lorenzer became colourfully vivid within the self-conducted exercises. Interestingly, in addition to initially hesitant and later more explicit positive feedback, an element of surprise emerged within the discussion with respect to what was perceived as an apparent blurring of the boundary between theory and personal therapeutic experience. In our view, coming into contact with oneself and others other than on a purely cognitive level during

the theoretical seminar was important and valuable – especially in terms of reducing fear and developing a deeper theoretical understanding. We were a little puzzled as to why, in this context, so much concern arose. In the meantime, talks had moved on to a discussion of European and international training standards. It became apparent that the basic knowledge to be conveyed during training is partly subject to considerable international variation – Lorenzer, for example, appeared to be almost unknown by non-German-speaking institutes, sparked interest, however, in concrete exchange with the purpose of receiving useful suggestions from one another.

Small-group work in the afternoon comprised intense discussion of anxiety thresholds, taboos, and possibilities and limitations of the developability of institutes with respect to training standards. How should the individual training areas (above all theory versus practice and personal therapeutic experience) best be weighted in order to facilitate a transition from fear to curiosity? Does even more theory produce “better” group analysts? Or is it of primary importance to strengthen prospective group analysts in their self and in their dealing with the group during practical work – might the ease of access to theory be substantially increased in this way? The need to recognize the dual role of trainees as both “therapist” and “patient” was addressed and the importance of competition – both between institutes and with group analysts with individual-analytic training – was discussed. Many issues including the difficulties in alternating between intimacy and external presentation led to lively discussions.

Indeed, we were amazed how well discussions were initiated and how colourful the constellation of different nationalities (and English accents) was. We heard, among others, Portuguese, Danish, Italian, Polish, Rumanian, Russian, English, Austrian, Irish, Norwegian, Lithuanian, Greek, Hungarian, Australian, and German group analysts conversing with one another and were highly impressed.

In the evening – in the first large-group gathering – this was a little different. We sat in rows along the walls of an enormous hall and we found it rather difficult to communicate and converse with one another. Many seemed to be tired from the intensive afternoon work. Somebody made an association with an enormous waiting room. However, we then discovered a number of other candidates with whom we later struck up some lively conversations.

On Saturday morning, the general mood appeared to again be more laid back. The sun continued to shine and most faces seemed to be relaxed. Regine Scholz introduced us to her work with a women’s

group in Germany. Against the backdrop of her observations and experiences with women in Iran, Ms Scholz had taken a new look at her German women's group with the primary aim of relativising "personal blind spots" in connection with being a group member of a specific society and culture. The issues addressed included differential handling and processing of the topic of one's own identity as a woman within a specific society and group as well as dealing with fears and the development of new possibilities as well as a new self-image during this process. At the point of the lecture at which the value and handling of the topic of virginity in different cultures was addressed, a certain association with our status as candidates surfaced within us. We were all too aware of our inner pressure to only make contributions which were particularly clever and carefully deliberated; a sense of a "forced loss of virginity", as Ms. Scholz referred to it in her lecture. At the same time, the desire to be allowed (for the meantime) to maintain our "virginally naive" perspective upon group dynamics among all of those experienced group analysts was also present. At this point, we were clearly aware that becoming a group analyst has to involve being allowed to go through an inner process which does not have to be (or maybe even is not allowed to be?) speeded up in order to go well. In our corresponding chain of associations, oppositional images and ambivalences reared our head, in particular concerning deeper examinations of that which we said and that which we were still to write. To a certain extent, it felt like an interpretation which had been offered too early. It was this that led us to explicitly write our conference report from the candidate perspective and which prevented us from having to see, reflect upon, and understand more than is coherent with our current identity.

In this context, we were both touched and "comforted" by Mr Wilke's lecture in which he expressly emphasised that it is not all about traversing from fear to curiosity in the sense of a unidirectional process. Rather – and in line with our thoughts – both aspects were presented as being simultaneously present. Under certain circumstances, the direction of this process can even be reversed, as illustrated by the case of the Maori woman.

Following a long lunch break in which many of us made our way to Heidelberg castle, we met in the late afternoon for the next lecture on a questionnaire-based comparison of institutes (Kristian Valbak, Paula Teresa Carvalho, Bettina Fink). The various training institutes had returned questionnaires regarding their curricula to EGATIN. During the presentation of results, we were able to observe from our

own reactions how difficult it is in such discussions, with a mixture of pride and shame in connection with one's own institute according to how high its "standard" appears to be in comparison with the other institutes, to remain in touch with one another. The following large-group session revealed, in our eyes, the degree of closeness between "evaluation" and "value" and the difficulty of remaining neutrally curious despite fears surrounding one's own ranking and standards.

Whilst feeling rather exhausted in the closing plenary session, we simultaneously had the feeling that something new had been formed – both on the outside and within our selves – and this feeling invigorated and stimulated us. We no longer sat in a "square" along the walls of an enormous hall but in a "fishbowl" formation with a lively swapping of seats between an inner and an outer circle. Those who had something to say took a seat in the inner circle and remained there as long as they wanted before returning to the outer circle. We curiously followed the fishbowl action. The general mood was relaxed and almost jovial. Jokes were made and people laughed. The issue at hand was scenic understanding within the plenum and the necessity of movement and mobility and their role in loosening fear and rigidity.

In the evening, we jointly made our way home – though the wide-open gate, along the Heiligegeiststrasse, and through the old town. Somewhat stirred up and excited, we shared out thoughts on the conference. We were glad that the final large-group session had been so lively; that we had become acquainted with one another; that we had dared to venture something and that it had gone well; that the conference was a place to pose and live with questions; that answers sometimes are not (yet) available. As candidates, we had the feeling that we were in good company. We saw that answers are developmental processes which are kept in motion through mobility, so that something new can emerge in cooperation with one another. We have made many interesting new acquaintances; that which was foreign has become familiar. All of this makes us curious as to what the next Study Days will bring and whether we might see one or two familiar faces.

Nneka Chidolue-Hoppe
Dr. Hermann-Krause

Containment, Terror and Transformation in the Large Group Context

A Short Report about a Panel during the Biennial Bion Conference

Dr. Heribert Knott

Every two years the psychoanalytic followers of Wilfred Bion run an international meeting. In this year, 2009, the meeting took place in Boston, MA (“Bion in Boston”) from July 23rd to July 26. The meeting was very interesting concerning psychoanalytic theory and practice and it was very interesting regarding what can be called “the human condition”. The main method to explore difficult psychic states and interpersonal exchanges in psychoanalytic treatment was the verbatim record of vignettes of the psychoanalytic session. There was no individual analytic lecture or discussion I attended without clinical material.

Although Bionian psychoanalysts consider Wilfred Bion purely as an individual analyst and usually don’t keep in mind his contribution to group dynamics there was never the less a large group meeting every evening. The conductor was Ed Shapiro. The method was different to the group analytic method, it was Tavistock-oriented. Additionally, on Saturday, 25th of July there was an afternoon session of three hours entitled “Containment, Terror and Transformation in the Large Group Context”. I want to report about this afternoon in more detail because – to anticipate the result – it was the only lecture without clinical material in the proper sense: bringing up the unconscious of the group I am member or conductor of.

This session was very interesting as there were announced three papers about large groups: Moises Lemlij from Lima, Peru reported from the “shining path”, (the terror organisation *sentiero luminoso*), Carole Tarantellei from Rome, Italy, spoke about the red brigades (terror organisation “*brigata rosse*”) and Maurice Apprey from Charlottesville, NC, U.S.A. spoke under the title “containing the uncontainable” about attempting to transform terror and passion in ethnological conflict resolution between Estonians and Russians living in post-soviet Estonia. The session was chaired by Ed Shapiro, Stockbridge, MA.

In all papers large group phenomena were described in a more sociological manner. There were very interesting facts I did not know about concerning the functioning of the brigade rosse for example. As the presenter's husband Ezio Tarantelli was murdered by the brigade rosse in 1985, Carole Tarantelli examined as a psychoanalyst the functioning of the red brigades in order to understand the genesis of these political groups that attempt to justify murder. But she did not have any large group experience with them. And the facts reported were predominantly of a sociological and political character. She added some information about the public utterances of members of this group. It seemed that the feelings spoken for public or political use differed from feelings disclosed, for example, in a group analytic setting.

The development of the shining path was described by the very experienced and knowledgeable Moises Lemlij. He made it clear why the shining path could develop and survive many years. And there was a plausible hypothesis about why the shining path collapsed: they began to fight the inhabitants of the small villages and by doing so they destroyed their own basis. It is evident that this is a sociological perception and a military perception as well. As one can see this is an accurate description of a large group the describer never was member of. And the most interesting phenomenon – the self-destructive ending of the group – was not identified as such not to mention analysed.

As these two papers were dealing with destructive large groups the presenters were not members of and as the destructiveness of these groups at the end could not be analysed, and as the discussion ran on about the dangerousness of large groups I asked myself in this moment if I was the only one to have good experiences in participating large groups. Up to this moment there was only terror, but no containing nor transformation according to the title of the afternoon.

Maurice Apprey started his paper entitled "containing the uncontainable" by presenting an episode of an individual psychoanalytic session dated 11th of September 2001 in the US on the day of the destruction of the New York twin towers. The analyst felt unable to contain his patient's anxiety and aggression (the patient's brother-in-law worked on Wall Street and the patient did not know at this time if he survived) and instead of containing he said to the patient: "What is new about what humans are capable of doing to one another?" He took this as an example of the analyst not being able to contain an external trauma. Then Apprey reported extensively and very

knowledgeably about the situation in Estonia after the independence from Russia and the associated ethnic conflicts. Apprey was part of the working group of Vamik Volkan and other American psychologists and diplomats who went to Estonia in order to help Estonians and Russian-Estonians to understand themselves and each other. But the work described was done in small groups, not in a large group. Some small group processes were vividly described. The method was neither group analytic nor Bionian (as I understood), but carried out in a consultancy style without working through the positive and negative transferences. Overcritical or strongly worded the small groups were skilfully directed apparently without mentioning the counter-transference but with strong regard to ethnic and historical details.

As even this third part of this large group afternoon did not show a fertile use of large group concepts – neither Bionian nor Foulkesian ones – one could leave with an evoked fear of large group processes which – according to this afternoon – can only be solved (not analysed) in small groups...

I tried to expound the problem to the organizers but I had the impression that they cannot imagine the unconscious of a group being analysed like the unconscious of a single person they analyse in psychoanalysis.

Dr. Heribert Knott
Psychoanalyst, Group Analyst
Stuttgart

Reflections on the New Dialectic of Group Analysis and Brain Plasticity in the 14th European Symposium in Group Analysis of Group Analytic Society in Dublin

Memories and Impressions

It is true that for many days I have been thinking of what writing for the GAS meeting in Dublin since so many fruitful experiences, dialogue and information have been exchanged not during the Symposium but for many days after. Finally I felt the desire to focus on the field of Neurosciences and Group Analysis and to combine some

points of my presentation in Dublin “Wire together, Fire together”, with what we have all shared with Ana Sofia Nava and Geraldo Rosito during the presentation fully enriched from Malcolm Pine’s never ending effort on Neurosciences, the presentation of Kevin Power on the Alzheimer Disease as well as the presentation of Sabar’s Rustomjee on Desire and Despair.

I should also like to notice that during the extended discussion on the Social Unconscious convened by Haim Weinberg and Earl Hopper the dimension of the cosmic co unconscious, described by Jorge Burmeister has been also associated with neurobiological representations of the Social Structures as well as with dreams that really proved that “what we learn is socialized”.

These presentations had not been realized simultaneously and had not been specialised on neuroscientific issues although they are of extremely neuroscientific and group analytic interest.

It is worth to say that this dialogue has been continued further in our e-mails, in other workshops, in lists of the web-side as well as in our current live. Its useless to say that the collection of these options is selective on Neurosciences and Group Analysis and of course does not corresponds to the hole qualitative income of other many presentations, workshops, groups or events. Thank you for the honour and the opportunity you have given to me to share with you these remarks.

Introduction

The colloquial folk belief that there is an influence of “mind over matter” and that the state of mind can have, to some extent, a significant bearing not only upon how an illness is perceived but also on its severity and its content, seems to be justified with the concept of “well being” that is common to all cultures and it is associated with declaration of “life forces” and “vital life energies”, like Chi in Chinese, Ki in Japanese, Prana in Sanskrit.

Do “talking therapies” have curative value and which is their physical effect on recovery?

Why do patients with depression suffer more immune depression?

Although we know that many emotional factors can influence a wide range of medical conditions we are searching for the reasons that some people develop specific diseases that vary on a completely different set of symptoms.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the Greek word diathesis that is the stress paradigm of the

interaction between the environment and psychological variables in terms of an individual predisposition to a particular disorder.

The diathesis-stress paradigm can sit as an adjunct to the biopsychosocial model of Meehl (1962) and it focuses on 3 factors that are: the stress, the predisposition to disease, the diathesis and an environmental disturbance.

The founder of stress Dr Hans Selye determined stress as the rate of wear and tear in the body.

In the biological organism no function or anatomical structure had ever been described isolated. Cells, organs of the human body neuronal circuits are all organized in a group model. In addition, human being had never been healthy living alone or isolated in social or biological terms.

The neuroanatomic web that is to say, the neuronal expression of matrix provides the holistic perception of the biological organism for its out-corporal space.

This option matches with Dan Siegel's point of view where free flow energy and information between the differentiated structures and associated functions of the Nervous System lead to neural integration.

Vast amounts of knowledge are acquired socially from other minds: the mind-to-mind leads to Andrew Whitens' Social Synapse creation thus leading to a chain phenomenon of transmission to other minds, other cultures and so on.

Synapse is the zone of contact, the place of interchanging information and it varies from neuron to neuron, from butterfly to butterfly of mind as Santiago y Cajal calls the neurons, from pro-synaptic to post-synaptic part of the specialized area of dendrites, the dendrite's spine, from mind to mind in a group. So the contact point varies in the course of life in many dimensional concepts like structural, hierarchical and developmental by causal, dynamic, economy and functional parameters.

The personal mind is capable of interacting processes thus in the group what is reproduced, is basically the matrix of its participating personalities and their neuroanatomic expression.

According to Descartes, protypon (model) of 'direct' knowledge is our self-consciousness, of 'whom I reflect on', and of 'who I am'.

Kurt Goldstein first mentioned that human organism behaves as a whole and Foulkes mentioned this dimension in the Group Analytic Situation.

Group Analytic and Psychosomatic situation is definitely not a process of disorders of differentiated parts and any symptom is faced as a dysfunction of the whole and not as a partial disorder.

This concept gives the chance to all of us to move on beyond the Cartesian consideration and discrimination of the body separately from the soul and to fly till the theory of the “thinking matter” of James Clerk Maxwell according to whom the norms of the matter are mentally made and vice versa, mental norms are made from matter. A new dialect for the discussion of immune reactivity in the brain may therefore be required.

So we have mechanisms for the structure and function of the brain to be influenced by the environment.

We have a brain always able to regenerate or generate significant functional elements in response to stimulation.

Clinical Realities Associated with Despair

According to Le Shan a percentage of 75% cancer patients have experienced before the clinical manifestation of malignancy:

- a) Parents-related problems during childhood
- b) Specific type of personality
- c) Loss of a kin beloved person.

Helplessness and hopelessness are common feelings of people described above in the same time that the disease of cancer provokes exactly the same feelings.

In Group-Analytic terms the familial communication is disturbed, or the type of personality does not permit healthy interpersonal or transpersonal communications.

The mourning or the post-traumatic state of loss condemn to isolation, resignation in other words to a non group model of leaving.

Stress is a common factor in all above familial and social situations and vice-versa stress is a factor inducing cancer that leads to an exhaustion of cortisol receptors thus provoking immune deficiency and depression.

Affective states and personality characteristics may be sometimes associated with differences in immunological reactivity which is influenced too by behavioral processes via neuroendocrine and psycho-immunologic pathways.

To give some examples: Helplessness and hopelessness are common feelings in women suffering from breast cancer; denial concerning stressing life factors is the mechanism that provokes immune deficiency and suppression.

Type C of personality is characterized by isolation, suppression of negative feelings, “anger in” that is expressed mainly by guilty is

also related with cancer personality. Alexithymia is related in general with psychosomatic disorders including cancer.

The most important determinant of immune system's resistance or susceptibility to disease may be a person's sense of control as opposed to a feeling of helplessness.

In her presentation Sabar Rustomjee mentioned the Lacanian aspect that "where there is life, there can be Hope, and where there is Hope there is a Desire". In her Lacanian framework Desire is born out of Lack, and from the space between need and demand. Despair means without Hope and the emotion of despair is described as feeling totally helpless. The emotion of despair is described as feeling totally helpless.

Helplessness and Hopelessness are also part of severe depression and can be a step away from life threatening actions.

Foulkes also mentioned that man is a social being and can only be understood as such in the context of his environment. Even individual mind reflects and represents the social model where he lives and is a complex network of interacting processes that interact in the network of the group, the group matrix or group dialogue.

The personal mind is capable of interacting processes, thus in the group what is reproduced is basically the matrix of its participating personalities.

According to Foulkes man is a social being and can only being understood as such in the context of his environment. Even individual mind reflects and represents the social model where he lives and it is a complex network of interacting processes (communications) that interact in the communications network of the group that is the Group Matrix and the Group Dialogue. Aristotle described human as Social Animal as well as anthropologist did.

Kevin Power in his presentation mentioned that the developing neurons of the baby's brain develop alongside those synapses that must be crossed by the tiny electric currents that convey information from one neuron to another and considered the vast complexity of these that is added to continually as the unseen glory of every individual! He also claimed that the absence of the baby's container release high levels of cortisol that might expose the child to a psychic pain. With good enough parents and carers the baby's anxiety is contained and the need for cortisol is quickly reduced. As a matter of fact he linked the cortisol level in baby's brain with its demands and the presence or absence of a container. From my neurologic point of view I should say that baby's neurologic reflexes disappear after the

age of 24 months that is the age when the infant takes distance from the maternal body and reappear in pathological situations like dementia when the presence of a care giver is necessary too. The power of the world of caregivers is freely lovingly given to the infant but this demand may also be involved with neurologic reflexes too.

In our brain we find an experience, a trace, but we no longer find the initial experience, all the more so because this trace is recombined with other traces according to new laws proper of life. Kevin Power mentioned that what the hippocampus is like to forget or feel it no longer wishes to retain are those things that have overlaid and squeezed out the earliest and most fundamental experiences.

Freud says that Fantasy combines lived incidents, accounts of past facts and things seen by the self itself.

But the image however formed provides a form of coding an object experience in a unique number of facilitations of certain number of synapses.

Sabar Rustomjee claimed that when one feels abandoned and left at the mercy of the one in power, there is a feeling of being totally trapped. Unbearable despair arises, with a feeling of intense fear and little or no resistance. Every demand is a demand for love and as that is an impossibility-namely for love to be made readily available on demand, such an impossible demand, invariably fails in its aim. Pathological reflexes of the brain like grasping and feeding in an old man with dementia could be faced as a failed demand of love, attention and care?

Malcolm Pines has mentioned that psychological and neurological damage produces isolation from the total network. What had originally been a nodal point functional network, analogues to synapses in the central nervous system become focal points, isolated from the functioning of the whole. The group has the potentiality to develop as maturational environment, reducing the need for defensive patterns which are being built as defences against anxiety. The developmental empathy as well as availability is concerned as the developmental aspects in Psychotherapy as they serve in care giving, creativity, trust and confidence.

It is clearly shown that “holding” of each member in a group becomes the “new play” of neurotransmission and the group “containing” leads to “a reverie of new neuromodulation”. Every member in a group but the group itself as a whole is a care giver for each other. The result is a truly “Foulkesian” brain, which has been shaped by its experience of the world and retains prodigious capacity to accommodate to environment change.

Malcolm Pines says that the group has the potentiality to develop as maturational environment, reducing the need for defensive patterns which are being built as defenses against anxiety. New patterns of relating emerge which are more mature, meeting the creative needs of the individual and for the collective creativity of the group. The sense of “we-ness”, “us-ness”, is created by the “executive we”.

The Group tends to express the next step to the Socialization as well as to the Psychosomatic Education through the transformation of the initial frustration that each member experiences to dialogue concerning their problem, to sharing, participation, contribution and partnership towards their problem. The Group as a whole is enriched in a level of Group Dynamics as well as in a level of healthy neuro-modulation. Through dialogue Ego resistances are decreased and the free expression and discussion concerning the psychosomatic problem makes new bridges beyond personal fears or narcissistic boundaries with direction the outside world.

“What fires together, wires together” with reference to the “La participation mythique”, of what is called psychic identity that gives a fantastic aspect of the primitive world restored in the prefrontal lobe of our brain.

It is determined by the dynamic network of the neuronic adoptions and synapses that are constantly modified through the dendritic ends of the neuron which many of them increase, thus making new adaptations, others decrease giving an end to the communication.

The final purpose of this situation is the major collection of information through a continuing exchange of energy from the “fire zone” of the neurotransmitters of the synapse.

As a matter of fact, we go further and beyond from the classic (as well fragmented) neurological point of view of the Brain Mapping and we start to consider Transitional Phases of Energy of the Brain (and of the whole Nervous Tissue) where Universality, Attractor Phenomena and Evolution Equations are observed.

The Long-Range and Term-Stability, the Non-Locality and the Emergence are the characteristics of the Brain’s Transitional Phase. In any sensory or cognitive stimulus, brain can respond and answer with a “biological one” that is equivalent with neuronic activation, energy exchange and modification of the histochemic situation of the neuron.

Social Brain is structured from its experiences and activities through its activation or withdrawal of the neuronal synapses according to its use.

This biological and physical structure that constantly changes is called Density Matrix an analogue of the dynamics of the Denser Phenomenon in Psychotherapy.

Density matrix framework can also be viewed in neuroanatomical terms as the Central Autonomic Network of the Nervous Tissue reflecting the interactions of psyche and neuroimmune systems.

By a quantum point of view, the binding problem, that is to say, the isolated activation of a particular kind of neurotransmitters of a synapse, after stimulation seems to be resolved. The coordinated stimulation of remote neurons the moment of the first of memory is called Engram and is the answer to the binding problem.

This dialogue reflects another dialogue called neurotransmission, a dialogue of energy between neurons and channels of ions in the cellular membrane and a dialogue of hormones in the whole body.

The Dialect of Group Analysis and Brain Plasticity

The individual mind is an objectification (or model) of an internal mental and emotional process: both personal (reflective), interpersonal, self and other, and transpersonal. This is a social model.

The previous presentations high lighted dimension of the brain plasticity that proposes a new model. It is the neurobiological aware with its group psychotherapeutic application as it is reflected in the interaction of human genes with its environment. Brain Plasticity is the capability of the Nervous Tissue to vary being modified and changed in a structural and functional level according to the stimuli of the environment.

The modification of the brain plasticity corresponds to the dynamic interchange and communication with the internal and external world.

Brain Plasticity is considered as the capacity of the brain as well as of the whole Nervous Tissue to be adapted, integrated and modified in a structural and functional level according to the stimuli of the human's body and its environment.

Brain plasticity is the fundamental neuron activity of a constant change of the neuron circuits and synapses that serves for the adaptation of the organism to the environment's changes and the maintenance of the cellular memory.

The whole nervous network emerges according to the model of the group matrix that is in a continuing situation of changing process called Plasticity (Brain Plasticity, Cellular and Neuronal Plasticity) according to the internal and external stimuli of the environment (Social Brain).

Long-term Synaptic Plasticity reflects the dynamic changes in any information processing synaptic and neural network.

Plasticity is not synonymous with flexibility or permanent adaptability that would leave the subject without certain determinism and a certain fate of his own.

It plays a role in the emergence of the subject's individuality. It entails a form of determinism but at the same time it produces this form of determinism of the subject as it frees him from genetic determinism.

The brain must be thought as a highly dynamic organ in permanent changes and relations with the environment as well as with the psychic facts of the subject and its acts. Eventually, brain is constructed and shaped every moment according to its experiences and activities, by activating or drawing away neuronic synapses in relation to their necessities and needs.

This mechanism of the brain plasticity in the social brain provides a constant interchange of energy supplements of the brain with its environment.

Plasticity introduces a new form of brain a view of not fixed organs, of not fixed organization of its neuronal networks but with connections to the early development with the network open to changes, to contingency that can be modified by events, experiences and potentialities.

The result is a truly "Foulkesian" brain, which has been shaped by its experience of the world and retains prodigious capacity to accommodate to environment change.

The basis of the fact of plasticity leads to a concept of a complex integration between a genetic determination and the psychic and environmental one leaving place to the unpredictable in the construction of individuality.

In Psychosomatics this effort is attempted in the milieu of the group-analytic matrix, through dialogue (verbal or no verbal) with safe relationships between members and through personal, transpersonal and inter-transpersonal communication.

So the psychosomatic problem is faced according to the internal world of each member, its internalized relationships and their modification by the familial, social, physical and political structures and mainly with focus to Brown's theory concerning the early infantile relationship of the baby with its mother. (Brown, 1994)

The skin of the maternal boundaries of the group reproduced a new skin in brain and in body (skin plasticity) as well as in self with new relations between the Self and the Others.

Conclusion

Rocco Pisani pointed out that the interaction network means that the individual intra-psychic equilibrium is structurally linked to the equilibrium of the interpersonal relations and that every break-down, or individual alteration involves a breakdown or alteration in the entire network and vice-versa (Group Dynamics).

Group matrix means that this communication and relation network contains some contents that consist of the biological and cultural heritage individuals have in common.

The interaction network is responsible for individual psychopathology.

The patient's psychopathology is the expression of the group's psychopathology, he is its spokesman, since he is the weakest point of this network and often ends up by becoming the "scapegoat".

However defence mechanisms exist since the Ego must take account of the Superego (which is a social structure) and of external reality..."

Patric de Mare described the brain as "matter" (<mater = mother) which is somatic, phyletic and instinctual. He discriminated brain from mind which is spiritual, erotic and thinking. He also mentioned that never has the mind been taken as so central to healthy and by the same token participation in the Median Group is self evidently therapeutic. Brain and mind product "praxis".

Brain, mind and dialogue lead also to the therapeutic approach of the biological organism through its group coexistence and function.

Could only the participation in a group analytic setting be a corrective emotional and environmental experience for the brain plasticity?

It becomes clearer now that a common model, ("prototypon") characterizes the transition from the Macrocosmos of Koinonia to the Microcosmos of the biological organization of the human being.

Could be this point of view a group analytic approach of the Brain Plasticity?

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Group Analysis – The Container Function

How can I love you if I can't get angry with you?

The 10 year old child had just arrived from school.

Apparently it had been a good day and she was in a good mood.

Later, after a small incident, she became ill-tempered and grouchy. The mother became annoyed and told her off. She answered: "I'm well behaved at school and I'm very polite elsewhere... I have to behave badly somewhere. So where should it be? It would be better at home, don't you think?"

At home, the house represents the privileged relational space of the family group, but also the physical space that this group inhabits. It's the place where more private spaces and common spaces coexist, where the individual and the group coexist from the beginning.

This child was asking to have her own mental and physical space at home, to put the things with which she couldn't yet cope with alone and made her feel bad. She wanted to have at home a container space where the emotions that made her restless could be absorbed and processed, making them more bearable and understandable. She was asking her mother and the others to play a container function in their relationship with her.

Regarding the container function and the ability to contain, I decided to quote some parts of the beginning of J. M. Barrie's novel, *Peter Pan*.

"... Mrs Darling heard about Peter for the first time when organizing the thoughts of her children. At night, after their children are asleep, all good mothers have the habit of reviewing their thoughts and tidying up things for the next morning, putting away the many things that, during the day, were left all around. If we could stay awake (but of course we can't), we would see our mother doing so and we would watch her with great interest. It's exactly like tidying drawers. We would see her on her knees, I suppose, examining with an air of amusement this or that part of what's inside of us, trying to guess where we got this or that, discovering things, some more charming than others, stroking things against her face as soft kittens and hiding others as quick as possible. As we wake up in the morning, the wickedness and the bad feelings that we took with us when we went to bed are all properly folded and organized in the back of our mind; and above all, fresh and clean, our thoughts are more pretty, ready to be used.

I don't know if you ever saw a map of someone's thoughts. Sometimes the doctors draw maps of other parts of us and our own map can even be extremely interesting, but the truth is that we never see them trying to make a map of the thoughts of a child, which are not only confusing, but also constantly twisting. They have zig-zag lines. Just like our temperature in a graph; it's likely that they are the island roads; because Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, coral reefs and pirate ships off the coast, savages and secret dens and gnomes that are invariably tailors; with caves crossed by a stream, princes with six older brothers, a cottage falling apart and a very old lady with a crooked nose. The map would be easy to make if only these existed; but there's also the first day of school, religion, father, the round lake, needle work, crime, the hanged men, the verbs followed by dative, chocolate pudding day, braces, visits to the doctors, the coin that people give us for pulling out a tooth and many other things; things that are part of the island or of another visible map beyond it, and all this is very confusing, mostly because nothing stands still".

Neverlands are, of course, very different. ... but, all in all, Neverlands have a certain air of common family and, if one could put them in a line, standing still, one could say that they all have the same nose and things like that...

Occasionally, in her journeys through her children's thoughts, Mrs Darling would find things she didn't understand and, amongst them, the more disturbing was the word Peter. She didn't know any Peter and yet he kept emerging here and there in John and Michael's thoughts and occupied Wendy's mind almost totally."

We all know the story. We know that Wendy and her brothers went to Neverland with Peter Pan, just as we know that in the end they decided to go back home.

If we follow Barrie's account, we realize that Wendy decides to go back home in the moment she can imagine herself as an adult and that idea is pleasant to her, feeling at the same time confident about her parents' love, knowing for certain that they left the window open so that their children could get in the house. We also discover that in the end the mother allows the relationship, the bond between Wendy and Peter, to be preserved, just like Wendy will do later with her daughter and so forth, for several generations.

Peter Pan is a charming story and Wendy is lucky for belonging to that family and having a mother like Mrs Darling.

Let's now leave Wendy and examine Laura.

Her mother's name isn't "Mrs Darling" and perhaps a more appropriate name would be "Mrs Everything".

Using the image suggested by Barrie in his account, we could say that when she was occupied with the task of organizing Laura's thoughts, Mrs Everything hated surprises, specially the idea that her daughter could have thoughts different from hers. Thus, she organized everything very carefully, so that nothing would be misplaced. She did it with the belief that only she knew what was best for Laura and that Laura should always remember this.

Laura grew up feeling unconfident and weak, in comparison to her mother who she felt was strong and resolute. Her relationship with her mother kept on being perceived as the only one that gave her the certainty of safety in case she needed it; it was her safe harbour, her harbour of refuge. She developed obsessive personality aspects and had a phobic relation with food, being frequently afraid that food, especially outside the house, could harm her or make her ill. She also felt very nervous when separated from her daughter, with recurring thoughts that something bad could happen to her. She mentioned that, in relation to her group of friends and colleagues, she had trouble in being more affirmative, specially in situations of greater conflict, and she felt that the others thought that her lack of self-confidence and her fears were due to the fact that she had been spoiled, she had had too much attention from her mother, she was still a spoiled girl, and they did not understand the pain she was going through.

Let's talk also a bit about Rita. Her mother's name could be Mrs Ice.

Mrs Ice had very little imagination and patience to deal with Rita's thoughts. She thought that it was a tedious task and that her daughter should deal with them as soon as possible. She was busy enough dealing with meals and such like, and even this she did only while Rita was still young, while she felt it was her duty. Besides, kids take ages to grow up and are a bunch of trouble. In fact, this was one of the few notions in which she and her husband agreed. For Mrs Ice, the relational experiences were of a cruel simplicity; you either agreed with her or you were against her.

Rita became precociously adult. She lived with the predominant feeling that she could depend only on herself and that she could not expect much availability or much credit from others. The world was a hostile and uncomfortable place where people related to each other according to their own interest, not worrying about the possibility of harming other people. To trust somebody was something she desired

intensely but also feared intensely, as an impossibility, something that sooner or later would reveal itself illusory and false. She belonged to the group of the unprivileged, of those to whom nothing would ever come easy. She was depressed, but never ceased to try to valorise herself at a personal level and to seek something that appealed her at an internal level.

... And one day, Laura and Rita's paths crossed in the same group of group – analysis.

Laura was the first to show up.

She presents herself from the beginning as a very dependent person and very eager for attention. She seems to accept that without much conflict. Yet, the group starts to realize the underlying conflict. Although mentioning frequently the positive evolution she is experiencing in the group, Laura is the person who more frequently arrives late or not at all. She justifies herself with aspects of the external reality and says she needs to feel that she's not being controlled, that she doesn't want to feel the group like an obligation. During the sessions she has frequently episodes of vision disturbance, where her vision starts to get blurred, sometimes together with headaches that keep her from thinking. She talks about the fear of losing control and going mad. The group reacts showing interest in Laura's difficulties and decoding the physical symptoms, but also expressing to her the significance of the way she sees each one of them and the fact that her absence was a form of aggression, against the others and herself, consequently being a way of avoiding to look at some parts of herself.

Rita shows up after Laura.

Of all the members of the group, she is the one who verbalizes more easily the transference aspects she is experiencing there. From a certain point on, she alternates between a feeling in which the group appears as a whole, as a protective and empathic entity, and the feeling that there, just like in the past and outside, some people are privileged and others discriminated by the group analyst. For Rita, Laura is the privileged, the therapist's favourite. She says she would like to miss the sessions with no trouble, as she thinks Laura does, for that would mean that she was not so dependent, that she didn't need the group so much.

For Laura, Rita's position represents the repetition of the feeling that she was nothing but a spoiled girl, whose problems were insignificant compared to those of others. For Rita, the experience of failure and discrimination repeats itself in the group. Although Rita manages to trust the therapist in the individual relationship, it was as

though inside the group she discovered that everything was just an illusion. There, just as outside, she received less than the others.

But Laura and Rita are in the group, where the construction of the truth means the possibility of finding different truths. The truth of the relationship of each member with the group, with the group analyst, between each other, and finally with their own ghosts and internal objects.

Rita's anger towards the group analyst grows. She changes her place in the group, keeping herself away from the therapist. She refuses to look at her and she questions her technical idoneity and her truth as a person. She threatens to break up with the group and she even announces her departure. At the same time, she verbalizes the deep bond she has with the members of the group. She experiences the group like a good mother, however weak, when facing the group analyst, the bad and powerful mother, the mother that never loved her but demanded that she submitted to her authority. This feeling keeps her from thinking and she tries to justify her grounds with objective reasons. Showing incapacity to live with the doubt, she offers unquestionable certainties. She feels confused and lost; the fear of being trapped in a room full of mirrors that confirm her guilt in the impossibility of being loved is stronger than the desire for the love of a mother/group analyst.

The group reacts and recognizes Rita's suffering. Rita, who is trapped on the other side of the mirror, refuses to look, and the group reacts looking in a different way, discovering different reflexes. The group finds that Rita is enacting extremely strong and deep experiences of her intern relational matrix in the here and now of the group's matrix, and that this power threatens to blind and distort all the mirrors. Paradoxically, Rita, who rebelled against her image seen through a mirror where she was reflected as bad, seems to refuse to use different mirrors, as if there was no other way. If she wasn't the bad one, the others were, in this case the analyst.

Rita starts to realize that, contrarily to what was expected, not only does the group not reject her, but involves itself and recognizes the importance of the problems she conveyed, trying to find new significances and meanings for the fears and torments of each one. Who is, after all, the group analyst? What is the truth about the relationships experienced there? What was internal and what was external? Is love compatible with aggressiveness, with anger? Can love exist without aggressiveness? Can they be experienced in the group? Are anger and rage always destructive? And what about love? Aren't some forms of

love predominantly destructive? Rita realizes that leaving the group is to continue to live without freedom, stuck to the past and to the destructiveness that it contained.

Laura's world, too, is disturbed. She questions her relationship with her mother and with her daughter. She comes to the conclusion that they are not free relationships, because they were lived without the possibility of separation, as if she couldn't see them as two persons independent of herself. She finally understands that, in these relationships, it was unlikely to feel the anger and the rage in an appropriate way. Maybe then the cause of her phobic worries about food and her obsessive worries about her daughter would become clear. She dares to get angry in the group and this incident originates one of the first threats from Rita of rupture with the group. Laura realizes that, although Rita's reaction was strong and she doesn't want to treat her unfairly, she is able to maintain her position without feeling guilty and feels surprised for not having the headache and the blurred vision. She realizes that her mother is not a safe harbour for her anymore and that she feels sorry whenever she can not come to the group. For the first time, she postpones her holidays to come to the group. By allowing herself to be more spontaneous, by involving herself more, she realizes that not only can she find new significances to her fears, but she can also contribute to the finding of new significances to the fears of the other members. The fear of being controlled diminishes; not missing the sessions would have much more to do with her own interest than with cold and authoritarian demands from the group.

While for Rita all feelings of love were constantly threaten by the emergence of a destructive anger that occupied all the space, for Laura the love relations didn't leave space for her rage; this rage had to find other ways to manifest itself. If the way Rita experienced her anger was destructive, so was Laura's form of love. Both were prisoners of an image reflected by a broken mirror, with which they eventually identified themselves, in a process of identification with the aggressor.

A 5 year old child said one day, in front of a mirror: "I would like to see myself as I really am... We never see ourselves as we are... only others can see us as we are..."

The home is the contained physical and relational space where everything starts. The space where the mother exists, as well as the father and all others. Where one would expect an appropriate performance of the continent function to happen, that would encourage the development of the child's abilities of understanding, acknowledgment,

acknowledging herself, of thinking and developing her own “containment” ability. A space where she could grow up and become independent in a harmonious way. In the same way, the group analysis group is a privileged space because through the organization of the therapeutic “setting”, through the work of therapist/mother/carer and through the interaction between all the members, the pieces of the content of each other’s psyche – that didn’t find a satisfactory answer in the past in their relation with the mother, at home, inside the family, and that still exist in a parasitic and destructive form inside each one – can finally emerge and be contained. In a conjunctive relational dialectic, where love and rage, love and aggressiveness, the SELF and the other, in their differences and similarities, can be experienced and considered, in a true process of internal transformation.

The subtitle that I gave to this paper was: “How can I love you if I can’t get angry with you?” I think it could be complemented with: “How can you love me if I can’t get angry with you?”

Paula Teresa Carvalho

RESEARCH

Mirroring, Infancy, and Mentalization

Can I see anothers woe
And not be in sorrow too.
Can I see anothers grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrows share,
Can a father see his child,
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill’d.

William Blake, Songs of Innocence and Experience

One prominent idea in scientific circles has been that of the social brain. In the late 1980’s it was hypothesised that the large brains of primates developed in order to process the computational demands of the complex social systems of these animals. As such, the social

brain hypothesis was primarily a biological and anthropological construct. More recently, the social brain hypothesis has been developed to provide a framework for understanding and explaining psychopathology. In this system, disorders are seen primarily as disorders of social functioning and social communication, and social relationships are seen as both creating and as manifesting the symptoms of these disorders. The brain is understood as being involved in and as the product of social interactions. Traumatic stress, for example, has a structural impact on the brain as can the socially interactive process of psychotherapy (Cozolino, 2002). One important implication of these ideas is that human beings are adapted to living in groups and may well need to exist in a positive group context in order to be ideally adapted.

The importance of the social for psychological and emotional functioning has been supported by some recent research studies showing that group participation may produce physical and emotional health benefits. These studies have shown that when people feel part of a close-knit group they are less likely to suffer heart attacks, more able to cope with stress and are better at retaining their memory than people who become socially isolated. For example in a recent piece in *Scientific American Mind* (Jetten, 2009), researchers from the Universities of Exeter, Queensland and Kansas review a number of previous studies, including many of their own, which identify a link between group membership and physical and mental health. They write that membership in a large number of groups was once thought to be detrimental because it complicated our lives and caused stress but that recent research is challenging this presupposition. Professor Alex Haslam of the University of Exeter is quoted as saying: “We are social animals who live and have evolved to live in social groups. Membership of groups, from football teams to book clubs and voluntary societies, gives us a sense of social identity. This is an indispensable part of who we are and what we need to be in order to lead rich and fulfilling lives. For this reason groups are central to mental functioning, health and well-being”. Dr Catherine Haslam of the University of Exeter, another of the works’ co-authors, agrees: “On the basis of what is now a very large body of research we would urge the medical community to recognise the key role that participation in group life can play in protecting our mental and physical health. It is much cheaper than medication, with far fewer side effects, and is also much more enjoyable.” The fact that the results of this research are so surprising to the mainstream academic community is due, in no small

part, to the influence of the individualistic ethos of modern Western society, the assumptions on which it is based, and the internalization of these values and beliefs on the part of individuals embedded in this culture (i.e. all of us).

This audience will readily understand the closeness of these ideas to key concepts in Foulksian Group Analysis. However, my main focus of attention here will be on the impact of the social and relational on the individual in early development with a view to forming links with Group Analytic theory.

The Theory of Mind Theory

The Theory of Mind Theory is an idea that comes from academic psychology and is primarily cognitive in emphasis. It is a useful elaboration of the social brain hypothesis that identifies the abilities and attributes that allow human beings to relate in a complex social world.

“Theory of Mind” (ToM) is seen as a collection of cognitive abilities that allow us to understand the inner world of beliefs, desires, emotions, thoughts, perceptions, intentions, and other mental states, and that these mental representations may conflict with reality. A developed ToM is said to help individuals to understand that other people have minds of their own and that their own minds and the minds of others are different and dependant on individual subjective experiences, beliefs, desires, conceptions, and feelings. Developing a ToM is said to help individuals to understand social interactions and allows them to predict their behaviours and emotional responses. It enables us to accurately anticipate other people’s behaviour, and in so doing, allows us to cooperate, empathize with, or deceive others (Gallagher & Frith, 2003). ToM has also been seen as is essential for our appreciation of pretence and the mental lives of characters in literature and other arts (Siegal & Varley, 2002). When an individual possesses a developed ToM, people are seen to be motivated by mental states that are expressed through action. ToM thus provides individuals with a context in which to understand their relationships with themselves and with others.

In terms of the development of a ToM, one variety of ToM theory describes children as budding social scientists. The idea is that children collect evidence, in the form of gestures and expressions, and use their everyday understanding of people to develop theories that explain and predict the mental state of people they come in contact with. Another hypothesis is that children are natural mind readers

and do more than just observe the behaviour of others. Rather, we create internal representations of their actions, sensations and emotions within ourselves, as if we are the ones that are moving, sensing and feeling.

The first variety of ToM theory certainly has limitations. It is primarily a cognitive theory and ignores the role of emotions and social experience. Peter Hobson (2002) describes the idea that children begin developing a ToM by theorising about mental states, intentions, and desires as “daft” because it ignores the role of social experience in facilitating this development.

The second hypothesis has received interesting confirmation from neuroscience. In 1996, neuroscientists were probing the brain of a macaque monkey when they discovered a cluster of cells in the pre-motor cortex, an area of the brain responsible for planning movements. This cluster fired not only when the monkey performed an action, but also when the monkey saw the same action performed by someone else. These cells were given the collective term of “mirror neurons.” Later experiments confirmed the existence of mirror neurons in people. However, in the case of *Homo sapiens* the cells responded not only to actions but also to sensations and emotions. This seems to be the basis of empathy, the human capacity to place oneself in the shoes of another.

There are clear parallels between the term Theory of Mind and the concept of mentalization introduced by Bateman and Fonagy (2006). Mentalization is described by Bateman and Fonagy (2006, p. 185) as “making sense of each other and ourselves, implicitly and explicitly, in terms of subjective states and mental processes”.

How Does a ToM or the Ability to Mentalize Develop?

Findings from infant research thus far indicate that neonates are innately predisposed to interacting with people and understanding them as different from non-human objects. Furthermore, children acquire a number of cognitive skills early on that eventually culminate in the ability to represent the mental states of others.

Babies, then, are born with or acquire very early a number of abilities and propensities that will help them learn about people. They find human faces, voices, and movements especially interesting. They seem impelled to attend to and interact with other people, and they certainly impel other people to attend to and interact with them. Infants respond differently to people than they do to objects and seem to expect people to behave differently than objects do

(Poulin-Dubois, 1999). They appear to construe people as agents that are self-propelled, goal directed, and influenceable at a distance by communicative signals. All of these seem like the right design features for a creature destined for theory-of-mind development. These findings support the idea that babies arrive in the world primed to relate in a social world and primed to learn most readily about social cues and stimuli.

Much research evidence is supportive of the above picture of human development. For example, Murray (1991) demonstrated how 1 to 2 month old infants seek to engage with others and also demonstrated how infants cease interacting when there is a disruption in this communication. Infants do not interact in this way with inanimate objects which suggests that even at this early age there is some recognition of similarity with other human beings.

However, the most telling evidence comes from studies that focus on the impact of less than ideal early care. Studies of children with depressed (Murray, 1991) and borderline (Hobson, 2002) mothers and mothers with attachment difficulties (Fonagy, 1999) show us the impact when mothers are unable too be ideally attuned to their infants. Murray's study of depressed mothers discovered that most of these mothers had an impaired capacity to relate sensitively to their babies and this affected their infants' ability to distinguish between self and other. These mothers were preoccupied with their own experience and less focused on their baby. Hobson reviews a number of studies that show that the children of mothers diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder were less able or inclined to share experiences with others since they were engaging in defensive strategies in their relationship with their primary caretaker that affected their ability to engage in reciprocal relationships with others. Fonagy (1991) examined the continuity of attachment problems across generations and concluded that insecure attachments are readily passed across generations if parents are unable to integrate their own difficult experiences, and that one important consequence of an insecure attachment is that it impairs a child's ToM or ability to mentalize.

Data from a number of studies support Fonagy's notion that a parent's capacity to make sense of her own and her child's mental states plays a crucial role in helping the child develop flexible and adaptive methods of self-regulation and to establish productive and sustaining relationships (Fonagy, et al. 2002). It seems likely that a parent's capacity to tolerate, think about, and regulate their own affects will allow them to tolerate and regulate the emotions of their child.

Thus, maternal mentalization ability has also been found to be predictive of attachment security at 12 months (Meins, et al. 2001) as well as impacting on the consequent development of children's own mentalization abilities (Meins, et al. 2002). Both Fonagy and Main propose that maternal mentalization has a significant resilience enhancing role in reducing infant insecurity and that the mother must communicate her understanding of infant mental states whilst responding in a way that communicates that she is not overwhelmed by the distress of their infant.

Daniel Stern (1985) also notes that the evidence indicates that failed attunement between infant and caretaker can result in a feeling of isolation and hopelessness that experience can be shareable. I have previously noted that these difficulties may lie at the root of pathological shame later in development (Birchmore, 199). An individual who experiences significant shame may then experience enormous difficulties in sharing feelings and experiences.

Further research illustrates the role of language in the development of a ToM. Harris (2005) found that the frequency with which mothers refer to mental states predicts their child's later ability on ToM tests and that the frequency of family discourse that emphasises different points of view also led to an increased score on ToM tests.

In his book *The Cradle of Thought* (Hobson, 2002) thinking emerges not just in the context of, but rather through, personal relations and interactions between people promote or distort thinking processes. Hobson describes the central role of the engagement between infants and caregivers in the development of thought, self-awareness, and language. He concludes that even a very young infant has an organised mental life, which is "expressed in behaviour that is innately fashioned to coordinate with the social behaviour of other people", that infants have an active social life right from the start, which is highly emotional, and it is through emotional connectedness that an infant discovers the kind of thing a person is. His studies of autistic and non-autistic babies demonstrate that normal babies are predisposed to take part in intense emotional interactions from within hours of birth. They form a 'vital and energetic interpersonal linkage' between themselves and their caregivers. It is through this emotional connectedness that a baby discovers that 'a person is the kind of thing with which one can feel and share things, and the kind of thing with which one can communicate'. According to Hobson, this emotional connectedness is also the prerequisite for a baby to acquire the capacity to think.

“A person is the kind of thing with which one can feel and share things, and the kind of thing with which one can communicate... We have a basic human response to expressions of feeling in others – a response that is more basic than thought”.

Thus, infants seem to be born with the capacity to respond with feelings to the feelings of others. Hobson tells us that it is only when an infant is engaged with someone else’s mind that it is in a position to begin learning about minds. This is a similar position to that taken by Fonagy (1999) who says that the child gets to know something of the caregivers mind only when the caregiver is engaged in trying to understand the mind of the child. “She thinks of me thinking and therefore I exist as a thinker” (Fonagy, 1999). It is possible to link this idea with Winnicott’s concept of “maternal reverie” in the “good enough” mother. The Cradle of Thought illustrates the need of the infant for a primary caretaker who can keep his body alive and his mind developing. Hobson notes that ‘we cannot watch someone else’s feelings and fail to react with feelings in ourselves. We have a basic human response to expressions of feelings in others – a response that is more basic than thought.’

On the basis of this research Hobson proposes three hypotheses:

1. The development of the mind is intrinsically coupled with social contact. Minds develop in proximity to other minds, not in isolation.
2. The nature of this proximity to others involves emotional engagement with them. The “tools of thought” emerge out of an emotional engagement with others.
3. This emotional engagement is built on the typical child’s disposition towards or potential-to-realise the satisfaction and value in inter-subjective experiences.

The capacity to use symbolism, and therefore to treat one thing as another, to treat it as a representation of something else, is a necessary ability for an individual to be able to mentalize. From about the age of 12 months, normal infants can “shift perspectives” in this way. They develop the ability to take another person’s perspective on events as well as being able to engage in pretend play, and to turn, for example, a plastic plate into a flying saucer or the space beneath a desk into a dog’s kennel. Hobson argues that this basic human capacity for empathy prepares the ground for language and

all other specialised forms of symbolism. “One can use symbols only if one has the kind of emotional life that connects one with the world and others.” Emotion is “the cradle of thought”, the basis on which human and other connections are established.

Hobson summarises the advantages of symbolisation when he says, “symbolising enables us to think of absent realities but also to conjure up imagined worlds; symbolising allows us to fix objects and events as experienced, and then to think about them; symbolising gives us mental space in which we can move to take up one and then another attitude to things”. He states that “Symbols crystallize and then protect a child’s ideas, so that the ideas can be thought with and thought about” (Hobson, 2002). They can also be communicated to another person.

The development of the ability to symbolise is also connected with the increased ability to deal with frustration, as it then becomes possible to insert thought between impulse and action. Deficits in the capacity to mentalise do appear, in clinical practice, to be significantly associated with problems of impulse control and the ability to tolerate frustration.

These findings and ideas readily link with the social brain hypothesis outlined above that social relationships both create and manifest the symptoms associated with psychopathology. It is only a small jump to link these findings and areas of discourse with group analytic ideas such as that individual psychopathology becomes played out and overt in the interpersonal transactions that take place in therapy groups.

Impact on Later Development

An impaired ability to mentalize or have a sufficiently developed ToM has been linked to a number of problems or conditions in adult life. Individuals with these difficulties are likely to have difficulty in assigning meaning to what others do and therefore understanding social behaviour. They have difficulties in empathising with or determining the intentions of others, lack an understanding of how their behaviour might affect others, and demonstrate difficulties in social reciprocity. They have difficulties in sustaining reasonably stable and non-conflictual relationships (Fonagy, 2002). A strong case can certainly be made in favour of the view that all psychopathology is based on problems of mentalization and it’s associated interpersonal and personality deficits.

Implications for Treatment in Groups

The psychotherapy group provides a forum within which group members can recognise their difficulties in understanding the mental and emotional states of others and themselves. They can then begin to repair these deficits by struggling to understand the emotions, difficulties, and behaviour of themselves and other group members. The group context is a situation par excellence within which interpersonal learning and self understanding can occur, in part through observation of the self explorations of other group members and in part through learning about the interpersonal impact of oneself via feedback from other group members.

It seems intuitively correct that group treatment provides a rich context within which individuals can learn about other minds, begin to think about themselves from an outside perspective, can learn the language of symbolisation and metaphor and can perhaps begin to play. All of these abilities, as we have learned above, are necessary for the development of a ToM or an ability to mentalize, and with the development of these capacities will come an increased ability to engage in satisfying relationships, to manage frustration, to think through and take a perspective on personal problems and emotions, and all the other aspects of healthier functioning outlined above.

These therapeutic qualities are very well captured by the concept of the “mirror reaction” as originated by Foulkes. Here is Foulkes’s definition of mirroring:

“The group situation has been likened to a ‘hall of mirrors’ where an individual is confronted with various aspects of his social, psychological, or body image. By a careful inner assessment of these aspects, he can achieve in time a personal image of himself not grossly out of keeping with the external and objective evaluation. He can discover his real identity and link it up with past identities.

In the development of a baby, the so-called ‘mirror reactions’ help in the differentiation of the self from the not-self. The reflections of the self from the outside world lead to greater self-consciousness, so that the infant Narcissus eventually learns to distinguish his own image from that of other images. The mirror reactions are, therefore, essential mechanisms in the resolution of this primary narcissism.

It can be assumed that a member of any therapeutic group has had a disturbed emotional upbringing, and that a good deal of narcissism belonging to his infancy still continues to function in his adult life. The mirror reactions in the group help to counteract this morbid self-reference. By sympathizing and understanding, by identifying with,

and imitating, by externalizing what is inside and internalizing what is outside, the individual activates within himself the deep social responses that lead to his definition, in the first place, as a social being” (Foulkes, 1957).

And again:

“Mirror reactions are characteristically brought out when a number of persons meet and interact. The person sees himself, or part of himself – often a repressed part of himself – reflected in the interactions of other group members. He sees them reacting in the way he does himself, who are in contrast to his own behaviour. He also gets to know himself – and this is a fundamental process in ego development – by the effect he has on others and the picture they form of him” (Foulkes, 1964; 1984: 81).

In mirroring reactions patients see parts of themselves in other group members through the sharing of feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. One might then be able to see these projected aspects as central parts of oneself, increasing self-awareness and the feeling of being connected to others.

The “mirror reaction”, if it is successfully achieved in the psychotherapy group, has been linked with the movement of the individual away from narcissism, the development of increased ego strength, and an increase in self-object differentiation.

One conclusion of this analysis is that it may well be a primary task of the group to develop the ability of individuals to mentalize through a focus on those aspects of group that are captured by the term “mirror reaction” or, in other words, on the development of empathic communication in the group. The further development of these ideas will require another paper.

One tantalising piece of evidence that group treatment can improve the ability to think, as opposed to feel, comes from a controlled study of Mellow Parenting, a group based program to help mothers of high-risk children to improve their attachments, nurturance, and emotional care of their children. This research showed improvements in the children’s IQ scores that were maintained one year after the end of these group meetings. A good example of research confirming clinical theory.

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Terry Birchmore

Correspondence

Dear Editors,

My response to the symposium and especially to the large group sessions that we shared there has been long in contemplation and very

short in being written and now comes to you very quickly due to your due date for printing. It comes rushed and almost unedited. I was struck by the long and intricate report that our new colleague from Mexico, Prof Ubert-Ocklander has had published in the March issue of Contexts, and by replying to her shall try and address what I felt about the large group session in Dublin. It was courageous to stand in the middle of the circle and address the assembled participants in her native Spanish and with her husband translating, I was relieved when Rudi asked her to stop and sit down, as it was stifling the spontaneity of response and contribution. On the Friday session she did something similar only this time from within the seating area, again translated by her husband. It was me, dear professor, who interrupted you in mid-sentence, the one whom you thought must be one of the three convenors. I was as uncomfortable as I had been two days earlier with your contribution. This time we were 30 minutes from the end and it seemed as a large group we had decided to finish without looking further at several matters that had been raised and the bypassed.

I had been a small part in the symposium preparation. I knew that the word 'despair' had been insisted on by our Irish colleagues due to the high rate of young male suicides in Ireland. There was very little mention of this in the scientific programme. From my small group I learned that an Irish male group-analyst had earlier that year suicided, and that this was known through the Irish g-a community. It was mentioned only on the Thursday by Jarlath Benson, and then only to say that he had died, not the context of his death. I tried to introduce this on Friday but it was not taken up. Instead there was much speechmaking that seemed only to push further away from us all the possibility of some here-and-now honesty and exchange in this large group context.

This was all part of what I now think was the CBT quality of how the entire group managed the situation. The emphasis seemed on cognition and behaviour, despite the convenors and others efforts. Cognitive in the sense of speaking in a politically correct way about the situation so that when actual\conflicts arose these were very quickly hushed up and ignored and passed over as experience that we did not want to address. Behavioural, in that we were expected to stand up and speak clearly, not to interrupt, that it was the wrong format for the group etc. Spontaneity of affect and contribution seemed banned. Only surfaces were addressed regularly. Several incidents took place when a different exchange took place. Malcolm Pines asking that Rudi give up his seat which provoked some reaction that was genuine and shocked both ways; the struggle over reserving seats in the inner

circle that brought threats of murder which also shocked; mention of the death of an Irish group-analyst (while omitting its true nature); a German colleague speaking of visiting the memorial to those who had provided food and aid to German children after WW2 and who had found himself choking on his words – this I found most moving; possibly late interventions due to exasperation at lengthy speeches near the end of the last session.

It worried me that so much time was spent thanking everyone for such an experience which covered up so much else and the general level of self-congratulation that was locking us all into an unquestionable process. Others did speak up against the tourist element that was introduced – participants wandering around the hall taking photos as we met as though they had come upon an interesting vignette among the local natives laid on by the tour company for the edification of those who had paid the fare. That did make me angry.

Kevin Power

The GAS Forum

The Forum is a space within which GAS members can discuss issues, share understandings, experiences and information, and agree and disagree. If you would like to join this lively community follow these instructions:

The first step is to send an email to David Glyn at: davidglyn@talktalk.net

He will then sign you up to the GAS Forum and you will begin to receive messages from the Forum.

The most important second step will involve you setting up your own Google account and this will allow you to change your email settings, unsubscribe if you wish, to read the files placed on the GAS Forum Google Group site, and generally to take control of your own administration. This will be expected of you.

So, you now need to create a Google Account in order to do what you want with your subscription to the GAS Forum. You will need to follow these steps:

Visit the Google main page at: <http://www.google.com/>

Any Google main page will be fine, however, Google.de, Google.co.uk, Google in Chinese, etc., etc.

Click on “Sign In” at the top right hand upper corner. On the page that loads click on “Don’t have a Google Account? Create an account now”. You then need to type the email address you have used to sign on to the Forum and choose a password. Easy!

You can then, from the Google Main Page, click on “more” at the top of the page, then on “Groups” – the GAS Forum will then be displayed and you can enter the site and change your email settings, view past messages, and view the files placed on the site by members.

Terry Birchmore

CULTURE

GAS/IGA Film Group

11th December 2009. Reign Over Me.

Directed by Mike Binder (US 2007). A moving and redemptive film about post traumatic stress disorder following the events of 9/11. Discussion led by Yana Stajavo, film maker and script writer.

15th January 2010. Gone Baby Gone.

Directed by Ben Affleck (US 2007). A dark thriller from the book by Dennis Lehane set in the seamy side of an American city and reminiscent of *The Wire*, which he has also worked on. Because of the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, the film was not released here until much later than planned. Discussion led by Dreda Say Mitchell, crime writer, broadcaster and education consultant, winner of the CWA John Creasey Dagger award for her first book, *Running Hot*.

19th February 2010. Doubt.

Directed by John Patrick Shanley (US 2008). A drama of religion, guilt and conscience, from the stage play by Shanley, with stunning performances from Meryl Streep and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Discussion led by Peter Wilson, group analyst and National Training Co-ordinator for the IGA.

19th March 2010. Savage Grace.

Directed by Tom Kalin (Spain/US/France 2007). A true story of Oedipal trauma in a privileged family, from the book by Natalie Robins and Steven Aronson. Discussion led by Dr Jo-anne Carlyle, clinical and forensic psychologist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist and organisational consultant.

Fee: £15 for individual tickets. £100 for a season ticket (only available in advance of season and not transferable).

We advise booking in advance at the IGA: 0207 431 2693 iga@igalondon.org.uk

Tickets are usually available at the door. Reserved tickets without payment must be collected by 7.20 p.m. to guarantee entry

Information from: Peter Mark 07786 088194

Roberta Green 0207 385 3408

Request for Foulkes Letters and Documents for Society Archives

We are appealing for letters, notes, and correspondence from Foulkes that Society members may possess. This will add to our already valuable society archive that contains much interesting material, papers and minutes and that is a significant source of information on our history and development.

Please contact Julia in the GAS office if you would like to donate any original or copied documents:

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Foulkes Lecture, 2010

The Islands of the Blest

Group Analysts and their Groups

14th May 2010

Brunai Gallery, London

Speaker: Jane Campbell

Respondent: Sue Einhorn

In Greek mythology these islands were peopled by mortals favoured by the gods and thus released from the depredations of labour and of time: “happy heroes for whom the grain-giving field bears honey-sweet fruit”.

In war-torn Europe Foulkes developed his ideas for a therapy whose underlying philosophy was one of freedom. Within their protective boundaries, group-analytic groups were to be free of structured time, with no agenda, no set task, no expectation of ‘closure’ or ‘understanding’, no goal of adjustment or socialization. Distancing himself from the medical model based on “normality, illness and cure” he offered a setting within which the creative function of the therapist would enable group members “to become themselves, to lead a fuller life, to make use of happiness and to avoid adding too much further suffering to their miseries”.

Can this language make sense to group analysts working within the task-focussed, evidence-based, time-limited, treatment-oriented, closely monitored psychological therapies of our time?

If Group Analysis is both an art and a science and if it is more than merely a technique and since Group Analysis embraces many languages, which will in turn determine not only what group analysts think and do, but what they look for and what they find, we may need to ask, as we place today’s heroes in our groups, whether the language that Foulkes used still has any meaning or relevance today.

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The Series Editor Earl Hopper, Ph.D. is a psychoanalyst, group analyst and organisational consultant in private practice in London. He is a Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society, Member of the Institute of Group Analysis and Fellow of the American Group Psychotherapy Association.

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