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Editorial

The last GAS AGM, in November, was been preceded by two Large Group sessions, and the presentation of the results from the membership GAS survey. Apparently it was a fruitful mode of organization, in the sense of integrating it in the GAS matrix, and we have two articles about it. Other themes in this issue are Group Analysis and adaptation to contemporary changing times and clinical challenges and group and team coaching.

We would like to have more spontaneous contributions from you to publish, and in this way Contexts can be a vivid representation of the Group Analytic matrix.

In last issue we announced that one of us, Paula Carvalho, was resigning from her position as co-editor. However, the GAS Management Committee asked if it would be possible for her to stay until the end of this year, to give time for a new co-editor to be appointed. So it was Goodbye, and now it's a pleasant Hello again, for one more year.

Please, send us your papers and have a nice and fruitful 2011.

Paula Carvalho and Terry Birchmore

President's Page

When this comes out we are hopefully into spring in varying degrees depending on where one lives and after a very hard winter where some of us literally were buried in snow for a long time.

Reviewing the past year what comes to mind are the losses of three of our oldest members David Clark, Ronald Sandison, honorary member and very recently Adele Mittwoch, honorary member. Each of them in their own way made substantial contributions to the development of Group Analysis by their ideas, skill and personalities. They will long remain in our memory.

As you know we have been experimenting a bit with the form of the AGM and not been very satisfied with the different solutions. This year we decided on a whole day event in London with a lecture, two large groups, and the AGM proper and this seemed to work. Convening the two large groups, one after the lecture and one after the AGM, gave people the possibility of expressing themselves in a free form. Not that it attracted as many people as hoped for, but it was clearly a success for those who came, so we intend to keep that format and hope people will spread the word.

The lecture at the AGM was about the GAS Members Survey conducted by Isaura Manso Neto and Robi Friedman. Isaura gave the lecture. The overall conclusion of the survey is that the majority of members are satisfied with the Group Analytic Society, of being members and of GAS initiatives. The Journal and the access to up-to date information on Group Analysis as well as group analytic theory and theoretical contributions are the most valued aspects. The internationalisation of GAS was also greatly valued. The evaluation of large groups was more ambivalent, it attracted not surprisingly the best and worst evaluations. Also concerning changing the name of the Society there were differing opinions, but the majority wish it to go though. The name "International Group Analytic Society" got most votes. This question will be taken up at the coming AGM together with other suggested changes to the Constitution. What was wanted among other things was more discussion on group analytic identity; the clarification of concepts and more research; workshops based on specific skills or techniques (applied Groups); more internationalisation; and events outside London.

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On the 12th November GAS and IGA had the second shared research event in London “Group Psychotherapy for our Evidence-Based Times: Research and Service User Perspectives.” It was a well visited conference with about 140 participants the overwhelming majority from the UK, but with representatives from Norway, Denmark Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden. As indicated in the theme it was mostly about groups seen from a user-perspective. It is a perspective too often neglected, which is indeed interesting, because our clients are the ones who really could teach and tell us and the authorities what does and what does not help them. Maybe we are afraid of having our cherished ideas questioned.

As announced in the preceding issue of Contexts Sigmund Karterud, Norway will be the next Foulkes lecturer. He will give the lecture “Constructing and Mentalizing the Matrix on Friday 13th May. The respondent will be Peter Fonagy known among other things for the concept of mentalization and mentalization based treatment (MBT). I am sure we are going to have a very interesting and thought provoking evening. The program for the day after the Study-Day is to be announced.

Finally once again I want to draw attention to the biggest event of the year 2011, the 15th European Symposium in Group Analysis, Cultures, conflict and Creativity taking place at Goldsmiths College, London, August 29th-2nd September. The preparations have been going on for a long time now and a very stimulating scientific and social programme is in the melting pot. You will have the opportunity meet colleagues from all over the world and from many different sorts of group work , clinical, educative, consultative and organisational creating a rich sounding board for sharing and discussion. So tell everybody to make an appointment for London 2011 and to sign up at www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk.

Gerda Winther
President, GAS

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.

Editor's e-mail addresses:

Terry Birchmore: birchmore@yahoo.com

Tel. 0191 3826810 (UK)

GAS Postal Address:

Group_Analytic Society

102 Belsize Road

London NW3 5BB

Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6611

Fax: +44 (0)20 7443 9576

e-mail: admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk

2010 AGM Plus

It was good to put faces to names at the meeting in Daleham Gardens on 23 October. Before completing the matching, I couldn't help noticing an attractive woman who'd spoken out confidently earlier in the day, smiling warmly at me. It turned out to be Paula and when she presented her report on Contexts, she stepped up the eye contact as she asked for contributions for the day's proceedings. I'd been targeted and here I am, hooked. "Just a short piece", she said, "your impressions". What follows then, is that; short and very subjective.

This was my first GAS AGM. It was surprising to find so few attending: 25 at the most and nearly two thirds from outside the UK. I think I was the only trainee. Gerda (Denmark) opened by describing the various formats that had been tried in previous years – to get more in I suppose although that wasn't said. Today was to begin with a presentation of the recent membership survey followed by the AGM sandwiched between two large group sessions.

The Membership Survey was presented by Isaura Neto (Portugal) and Robi Friedman (Israel). I expect the results will be published and discussed more fully elsewhere. Briefly, just over a quarter of the membership responded to the questionnaire, statistically representative of the whole; the outcome was not much different from the previous 2001 survey; the largest demographic was doctors and psychologists; most respondents were happy with GAS, liked its internationalism, the Journal, the triennial symposium, the website, the internet forum; activities were limited by financial constraints. Group-analytic theory topped the bill for preferred themes at meetings and large groups got the fewest votes. No conclusions were reached about any name change from 'Group-Analytic Society – London'. There were few dissenting voices but the views of those who had not responded remained unknown.

The AGM reports added recent and further information about these topics in the structured way that AGMs in the UK do. There was a Q&A following the presentation and discussion during the AGM but the luxury – and success of the day – lay in the opportunity to think further and explore ideas in the large group sessions, gently conducted by Sylvia Hutchinson. Well, they were called "large group" but in fact were much nearer Pat de Maré's median size. A consensus

at the end of the day was how good it was to be able to see everyone. There was a sense of belonging.

Discussions

Without notes I find it difficult to recall when the following themes emerged in discussion, whether in the large group or otherwise, including during coffee and lunch breaks. Instead of trying to describe them in the usual way, in the spirit of experimentation around the AGM format itself, here's a word cloud which I hope will conjure up something of the day's thinking.



The AGM closed with a presentation to Jerzy Pawlik of a lifetime honorary membership in recognition of his achievements in Poland. In his modest and brief acceptance, he referred to his teachers and talked about trusting the group and challenging. I thought about how challenge depends on trust. Leaving the meeting with these words as headlines, I was pleased to have been part of the day but with questions remaining about those who were not, about the 70+% of members who had not responded to the survey and of all those who remain silent in large groups.

Joan Fogel

GAS AGM-Day, 23rd October 2010

Accepting the challenge to trust the group

Setting the stage for the day, there were orchids amongst a huge vase of flowers in a blaze of autumnal colours. For me, incredulity meant closer examination was necessary; were they plastic, dead or alive? They were real. Yes! After a three year gap in attending GAS events this was encouraging. Whatever happened, we would be celebrating and that was my intention too.

The AGM was folded into a day where there was plenty of space for connection, with fresh air and a rain-soaked spree as some of us bought lunch from the delicatessen in Belsize village to eat together in the library at Daleham Gardens. Much as I look forward to large groups, on paper the programme was a challenging mixture. So it was with some trepidation that I anticipated what might be a dry survey session at the start, followed by the first of two large groups, and in the afternoon a lengthy agenda for the AGM, ahead of the second large group. As it turned out, by the end of the day I thought it had been an appropriate arrangement that paved the way for hard work and pleasure, opening up to possibilities; infinite, specific and creative.

The holding of this whole day programme around the AGM, I found to be surprisingly moving. Months later, as I write, things continue to transmute.

Despite the hard work of those involved in revealing the outcome of the survey, statistics from responses of about a fifth of the membership were partial at best and seemed to offer little clarity. More questions were prompted about the percentage swing that was most marked, between those who stated they were very satisfied and very dissatisfied with large groups, compared with any other listed activities of the GAS. During the AGM we heard that the spoken aim of the survey had been “for dialogue”. Perhaps the earliest session did give us a springboard, and helped us gather ourselves for what was to come.

When we plunged into the first large group, talk of death or survival of the GAS, led to the suggestion mourning is necessary and compost for growth. Ultimately the word futile seemed to become fertile. During this development Sylvia Hutchinson, as conductor asked, Who are we? and What risk would we take? I brought my passionate interest. We could accept ourselves as a body, collectively and one each. By literally tapping on the body, we might borrow

benefits together which could amplify or condense in a transformative way, with and beyond the reach of words. I risked a demonstration by tapping on the fleshy side of my hand, the karate chop point, a place of strength and trust as in a hand-shake which might accompany and help to balance what is emotionally charged in the dialogue. Extending this as an invitation was a ground-breaking leap for me, which seemed to be received with quiet curiosity. Although it is not yet common in group-analytic practice to tap on ones own body, I believe that conflict resolution may be much more easily approached by talking plus tapping along the way.

The question of who we are also generated discussion about membership. In its early years, we heard that the GAS was a 'Learned Society' whose membership through open sponsorship included two Nobel physicists and leaders untrained in group analysis. Who are we willing to meet as members today, only the group trained/trainee professional, why not politicians too and non-medical managers in addition to the many psychologists, doctors and social workers.

The AGM passed swiftly as Gerda Winther steered us through the agenda. There was a farewell to Liz McClure whose secretarial support had made her job easy, thanks to everyone for their part in committee work, and acceptance for all the new members nominated to join the committee. The big question, "What do members want?" raised questions about CPD, and whether events at least in London are run by the GAS or the IGA, and who therefore profits by them. Could competition be more widely coupled with healthy cooperation? The creation of a UK Chapter was discussed, however what this would be remains a mystery to me. The identity of the GAS with International before and/or London after its name is still under discussion, yet the survey this year showed less inclination to include London. I remember Adele Mittwoch as she usually was, vibrant. It was the last time we met.

A highlight came at the end of the AGM, when Jerzy Pawlik from Poland was given Honorary Membership of the Society. Graciously and with a twinkle of enjoyment in his eye he invited us to "remember a group needs challenge" and "trust the group". I thought these took root especially during the next session and chose the title above with thanks to him.

The final large group took up themes around international and internalisation. Of the 26 or so members present, two thirds came from six or more countries in mainland Europe including Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Poland and Portugal. The UK minority

was commented upon as strange. Also very much represented in the dialogue were South Africa, South America and the USA. Many shared touchingly from their intercultural experiences at the end of the day.

Gerda invited Sylvia to take home and enjoy the flowers, to grateful applause.

What, I wonder, will group-analysis be like by 2050. Hopefully, a Happy New Present to everyone.

Liz Jupp

Cert Ed.; Group Psychotherapist; EFT Practitioner

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

New Year 2011.

The Survey of GAS membership's satisfaction of 2010

This Survey was basically an initiative of the GAS Management Committee, especially Isaura Neto, who chairs the International Development Committee (and me). It included 13 structured and many open questions which aimed to investigate the amount of satisfaction of GAS members with various aspects of the Society, and these questions were answered by most of the respondents.

Roughly a quarter of the members responded, and while the percentage is statistically valid still a question arises about the silence of the majority of our members. Similar to Large Groups they may well hold unspoken truths about which our Management Committee is quite curious.

The Survey was sent and answered by mail and there were many aspects in which David Glyn (UK) and Teresa Bastos Rodrigues of Portugal extended essential help. Different aspects of our organization were explored: being a GAS Member; GAS activities and initiatives; our "Internationalization"; the name of GAS; our future development; anticipated obstacles; and the satisfaction with the questionnaire itself.

In numbers, GAS seems interestingly international: there were no virtual differences between the degree of participation and scores of the different nationalities. There seems to be a small difference between Greece, Poland and Russia, who were less participative, and Australia, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Portugal, Sweden who were the most participative. Roughly two thirds of the respondents were women, a little more than a third were psychologists and a third from the medical profession. The other third were half Social Workers or Teachers. 82% of the respondents were Full Members.

The main results: Half of the respondents are satisfied and 31 % are most satisfied GAS members. These 82% satisfied stand against 4% of GAS members who are not satisfied. A majority valued many features of GAS membership; the most valued feature was the "Access to up-to-date information on Group Analysis". They were followed by "belonging to an international Group Analytic organization", "professional development events; "Opportunities to exchange professional knowledge and experience" and "Access to scientific

events” were all valued by majorities of 85% and up. The Journal was most valued by 90% of the membership, followed by Contexts - 81%, Triennial GAS Symposiums - 80%, Annual Foulkes Lecture - 74%, Winter/Autumn workshops - 66%, GAS Website - 57% and last but not least the GAS Forum - 50%. Possibly a lack of familiarity with the internet is one possible explanation for the large drop to these last two aspects. More than 90% of the respondents valued the Theoretical Contributions of GAS Study Days and Congresses and themes relevant to Small groups. But also Median groups and Large Groups were valued by more than 80% and only Supervision a little less. Supervision being the last valued surprised me more than the responses of the 10% who had something against Large Groups.

The international character of GAS felt important to 87% of the respondents, and also the Scientific events out of London (73%) and Scientific events outside of my country (70%). Interestingly, more than a third suggested changing the GAS name to “International Group Analytic Society” and together with those who suggested changing the name to “Group Analytic Society” comprised more than half of the respondents. 61% wanted to take off the “London” part of the name, as against the rest who wanted to keep it. Less than 49% answered the difficult question about the future development of GAS. Suggestions for future trends were: more internationalization and more events outside of London; more research; more workshops based on a specific skill or technique; clinical practice; NHS clinical themes and supervision.

The large majority (82%) of the respondents had a positive reaction to the questionnaire. For us in the MC it was interesting to analyse and understand the results, including the open questions which included many very useful remarks. After the last survey done by Gerda Winther about 10 years ago, it was about time to get into direct contact with the user of the services which are provided by GAS. It was stimulating and hopefully we can use this feedback to plan the significant trends for the future.

The Survey was presented at the AGM on the 23rd October 2010 in London.

Robi Friedman

EGATIN STUDY DAY

Is All Group Analysis Applied Group Analysis?

Can Group Analysis and Training Adapt to Changing Times and Contemporary Clinical Challenges?

Introduction

The invitation to talk on the theme of the Study Day – understanding clinical material in group analytic training and practice- has come at a time of dramatic changes and a significant cultural shift in mental health policy in the UK, and a time of concern about the future of analytic therapies in the public sector. In the name of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), the UK government is directing funding into short-term, “evidence-based” Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Recessionary times and the consequent cuts in public services have impacted on the uptake of psychodynamic therapy and training. The London IGA qualifying course has, for the first time since its inception, had no intake this current year; the Turvey training will be having its last intake this year.

In addition, in recent years, group analytic trainings report that students in health service placements struggle with setting up and maintaining group analytic groups which appear to have a larger proportion of severely disturbed patients than training groups in the past.

How do we respond to the current (hopefully temporary) waning of the power and influence of analytic therapies and group analysis in particular?

We would expect there to be changes over the last 50 years or so, in all aspects relating to mental health e.g. in the descriptions and classifications of mental health and disorder; in society’s attitudes to mental health; in the different approaches to the understanding of behaviour and of mental functioning and their associated clinical practice modalities; and in the growth of health professional organisations and regulatory bodies (both voluntary and statutory) which are associated with the understanding and treatment of mental health conditions. And we would expect there to be changes in what approaches are held in favour, i.e. the fashion of the moment.

The manifestation and identification of mental health disorders and their treatments has changed significantly since Foulkes first

developed his ideas in the middle of the last century on group analysis and group-analytic therapy as an approach that could provide treatment for a wide range of disorders. Embedded in the group-analytic approach is the notion of adaptation and change. To quote Foulkes: he defines the organism as a system “in dynamic equilibrium. Dynamic means that it is never in a state of rest, has constantly to adjust actively to the ever-changing circumstances, milieu, conditions in which it lives. Such adaptation, however, does not take place mechanically following physical or chemical principles merely; there is always a creative element present, even in the simplest form of adaptation.....” (Foulkes 1948 p.1).

As with the individual, the group, society, is never in a state of rest, constantly adjusting actively to ever-changing conditions. At the macro, society level, these changes (in what Foulkes would refer to as the foundation matrix) take place very slowly, over decades, centuries.

I would like to explore here how patterns (the diagnostic, normative approach versus the dynamic, idiopathic approach) both change, and how they stay the same and follow the same path or trajectory.

And I would like to present some of my ideas on how (and whether) group analysis has adapted to change and what the implications are for current group-analytic training and practice.

Developments in group analysis

Foulkes was a psychiatrist and Freudian psychoanalyst as well as the pioneer of a new discipline, group analysis. In this new discipline he eschewed the growing trend in psychiatry to follow the medical model of classifying and coding signs and symptoms of disease entities (DSM, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual was first published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952, four years after the publication of Foulkes’s first book). Instead he espoused a social/relational approach (implicitly incorporating a Freudian developmental model of mental disorder, despite its contradictions with group analysis). To quote Foulkes : “Neurosis is not a disease, but arises from problems which concern everybody. All illness is seen as interpersonal and as involving the community.” (Foulkes 1964: 296) and “All psychopathology is essentially comparative. In the group we can study the interactional processes in between persons as well as their differential reactions to the same current material. The group is therefore an ideal setting for a comparative psychopathology in operation, in actual living reality. Moreover these differential reactions

are in a dynamic state, that is to say they change, and we can therefore study when, why and how they change.” (Foulkes 1964: 297).

Foulkes defined disorder in terms of disrupted, blocked communications and relationships. Although he was a psychiatrist presumably with an internalised normative, descriptive classification system, Foulkes’s thinking (influenced not only by psychoanalysis but crucially by the philosophers and social scientists of the Frankfurt school and by the Gestalt movement) and his writing was framed in dynamic psychological language, the language of communication and relationships. The work of translation, of making communications increasingly understandable and shareable, constituted the main therapeutic task.

The contradictions between the Freudian and Foulkesian paradigms have been well documented by Farhad Dalal in his book “Taking the Group Seriously” (1998) encapsulated in the notions of an “orthodox” and a “radical” Foulkes. Given that no current theories hold a monopoly on “the truth”, these contradictions may not be such a bad thing in that they stimulate a constant questioning of essentials, e.g. the part played by nature or nurture, the relationship between internal and external, the nature of the unconscious, the significance of the social; and also, I think, where to locate between a normative, diagnostic approach and a dynamic, inter-subjective approach. Freud’s developmental psychopathology did attempt a classification of disorders – whereas Foulkes did not provide a taxonomy (a classification) of disorders in terms of particular kinds of communication/relational blockages and disruptions, and the forms that they might take. (Nor has this been developed by his followers!).

The contradictions between a quantifying structured, manualised, statistical, discrete and normative pathway on the one hand (one that lends itself to evidence-based practice methods) and a dynamic, holistic, layered, integrative and open-systemic paradigm pathway on the other (more difficult to measure and quantify), these contradictions reflect a bifurcation (a split or division) that has been there from the beginning, and the parallel pathways that have always been there. This emergent duality is currently being played out in the following dilemmas:

- How do we hold together the analytic search for understanding on the one hand, and the skills-based component of our trainings on the other (this is being played out in the current proposed changes in the structure of the London training towards a more skills-based Intermediate year)

- And in clinical practice this is being played out in how we hold together the non-directive “group-analytic attitude” and a potentially directive “executive authority” role or style. Can we effectively move between them?

Changing Clinical patterns

When we look at clinical material there is an inevitable attempt to diagnose, to classify, to group together clusters of “symptoms” or manifestations of mental disorder. Much of our current evidence-based research relies on the use of diagnostic categories in one way or another. Since the first version of DSM appeared in 1952 there has been a proliferation of diagnostic categories (from 106 to 365 in DSM –IV- TR in 2000). This increase mostly represents greater specification and refinement of different forms of disorders. Some categories have been added: e.g. ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in 1994 - and some have changed form: e.g. the exclusion of Homosexuality in 1974 as a category of disorder, at first replaced with Sexual Disorientation Disturbance, then Ego-dystonic Homosexuality, now replaced by the category Gender Identity Disorder. This latter example indicates the extent to which political and socio-cultural forces affect how we view and categorise disorder.

In the latter part of the century, there was a notable increase in presentation of a range of eating disorders and body dysmorphias, in the diagnoses of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) often linked to histories of sexual and/or physical abuse and neglect, and in the diagnosis of BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder). As a Foulkesian practitioner I cannot but see these changes as reflecting socio-cultural and political changes, changes in attitudes to (mental) health as well as increasingly elaborated diagnostic classification schemes and recommended treatments. Lisa Appignanesi (2008) writes about how images suffuse daily life in the West, through TV, advertising, the internet, the media in all its different forms and how in parallel with increasing western consumerism and polarisation of the rich and the poor there is an increase in eating disorders. Glamorous images of women echo “the gaunt faces and shapes of famine-struck children” (Appignanesi, 2008: 429) and “the desire to be thin” is accompanied by a significant increase in obesity in the West. “Our zealous concentration on food, on feasting or fasting, and the attendant body image, has given rise to a series of culture bound psychopathologies” (Appignanesi, 2008: 432).

The development of technologies over the last half century particularly the internet have dramatically changed our patterns of communication allowing for disembodied communications of different kinds. We don't yet know how this may shape our psyches in the future, but I suggest that the disembodied nature of our increasing use of cyberspace communication is likely to give rise to further or new categories of disorder.

Theoretical developments and changes

So, what models or schemas are there to help us understand the clinical material we are presented with today? And how might these be absorbed into group-analytic training? The DSM classification offers categories as prototypes, to be used as a convenient shorthand for professionals, but makes no assumptions about the aetiology of the syndromes described, nor models for understanding, and offers no explicit treatment recommendations. [In the UK, treatment recommendations are now provided by NICE, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence, based on “evidence based practice”] Foulkes incorporated the Freudian developmental model (describing the genesis of a range of what were called “neurotic” disorders) into a framework that privileges the social (the social permeates the individual to the core), that is essentially relational (apparently there will be a new category of disorder “relational disorder” in the next DSM revision), that believes in the power of the unconscious to shape or direct human experience and behaviour and that holds to a dynamic open systems paradigm (rather than closed system) view of man.

Psychoanalytic theory has developed and diversified since Foulkes first presented the case for group analysis, and group analysis has absorbed concepts from different analytic theories that are consistent with its basic assumptions and basic paradigm. Analytic language that describes communication and relational processes such as projection, identification, projective identification, internalisation, etc are all common currency in group analysis, whereas references to Freud's structural theory, id, ego superego, or to the repressed unconscious and recovering repressed memories, are rarer.

Many contemporary psychoanalytic approaches (e.g. intersubjectivity, relational approaches, attachment theory, self psychology) have adopted relational paradigms that have much in common with the group-analytic approach and some have also moved (more or less) towards taking account of the social. We now have an identified

literature on Self Psychological approaches to groups (incorporating its own developmental psychopathology paradigm based on an analytic theory of the development of the self). The popularity of attachment theory and attachment models, both generally and within the group-analytic community has, in my view, grown significantly in the last 20-30 years and has spawned various approaches to treatment. Manualised treatments are no longer the sole property of the cognitive and behavioural therapists (who have also incorporated concepts from Eastern philosophies giving us DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy), meditation and mindfulness practices) but manualised treatments now include treatment models based on analytic principles and understanding such as CAT (Cognitive Analytic Therapy) EMDR, (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) and MBT (Mentalization-Based Treatment) based on an attachment model. Rex Haigh, at a recent conference “Can Group Therapy survive NICE? (January 2010) described these treatments as alphabetic spaghetti (this is pasta in the shape of individual letters of the alphabet often fed to young children – this metaphor implies that discrete letters on their own don’t have much meaning if they’re taken out of context ie if they’re not part of a word or sentence communication). In the UK we do have group analysts shaping their group work towards a CAT model and more recently group analysts interested in incorporating MBT thinking and practice into their group work – in fact there are plans to incorporate more teaching on mentalization onto the London training programme.

I would now like to take one of these manualised “spaghetti” treatments, MBT, to explore how group analysis might adapt to changes in theory and practice in the psychotherapy field.

MBT as developed by Bateman and Fonagy (2006) for the treatment of Borderline Personality Disorders derives in part from the Anna Freud tradition and the concept of ego deficits (as opposed to the Kleinian model which sees severe personality disorder in terms of the operation of predominantly primitive processes such as projective identification, splitting and fragmentation and treatment as the integration of split-off parts of the personality via interpretation). In this model the difficulties of the BPD individual are not primarily because of conflicts between different parts of the self, but because of a stunting of the ego. In this model trauma has disabled the usual developmental process, in such a way that not only may the individual have projected unwanted parts of themselves into others, but they are incapable of certain areas of mental functioning ie mentalizing. “Mentalizing simply implies a focus on mental states in oneself and

others, particularly in explanations of behaviour. That mental states influence behaviour is beyond question. Beliefs, wishes, feelings and thoughts, whether inside or outside our awareness, determine what we do.” (Bateman and Fonagey 2006: 1) “Mentalizing as a construct is very close to meaning-making” (p.7) (this is very consistent with a Foulkesian psychotherapy model). Bateman and Fonagey also highlight two pre-reflective modes of thought that antedate mentalizing: (i) the ‘psychic equivalence’ mode (you think as I think, difficulties separating my mental state from your mental state, making the use of an interpretive mode highly risky according to Bateman and Fonagey) and (ii) the ‘pretend mode’ (a detachment from reality). I do predict that with increasing use of the internet to communicate with others, internet dating, chatting etc, that we may see new syndromes developing that are characterised by excessive reliance on ‘pretend mode’ and the absence of reality testing.

Bateman, in his address to the IGA/GAS workshop “Can Group Therapy Survive NICE?” (January 2010) suggested that there is poor evidence for the Foulkesian claim that groups with severe personality disorders can develop a productive group culture with the help of a minimally engaged group therapist. He then went on to outline the more structured, active, individually orientated role of the MBT group therapist whose primary task was to provide a training ground for mentalization. It seems to me that this so-called Foulkesian claim represents a stereotyped and distorted view of group analysis (the source of this Foulkesian claim was not identified in the talk) – as though Foulkes advocated a blind “trust the group”. The level of activity of the group-analytic conductor, and the extent to which s/he “trusts the group” as the therapeutic agent, will depend on many factors including the level of personality resources and functioning in the group, the stage of development of the group, the level of anxiety in the group etc. It seems most unlikely to me that a group analyst would set up a weekly outpatient “stranger” group composed entirely or primarily of severe BPD patients. Such groups are more likely to take place in a day unit or residential setting and would certainly require a more active stance from the conductor (I don’t think any group analyst can accurately be described as minimally engaged – the group analyst is actively engaged but in a responsive non-directive manner, intervening when there is evidence that the group is stuck, or is developing a non-therapeutic culture).

This brings me back to my proposal that in order to adapt to changing times and contemporary clinical challenges, we need to develop

more explicit rationales for how and why and under what conditions we modify group-analytic method and the role of the Conductor.

We have had a number of students on group-analytic training programmes, particularly at Turvey, who work in personality disorder units or complex needs services primarily with severe personality disorder. Such students often have to shift from a more managerial, active, sometimes prescriptive way of working to a more analytic position (if they're lucky enough to be in a training placement that can refer a mixture of patients, and not exclusively severe PD patients as occurs in some placements).

The classical stranger group-analytic therapy group allows for a fully analytic therapeutic experience. Foulkes promoted a methodology that allowed for a dynamic view of the individual and the group from different perspectives or levels, the current, transference, projective and primordial levels. Therapeutic tasks, namely the correction of authority relations and social adjustment, and the operation of group specific therapeutic factors described by Foulkes such as mirroring, exchange, condensation etc can all be enhanced or restricted by adaptations of group-analytic method.

The analytic factor, represented by the group-analytic attitude, and the constant setting and constant boundaries in time and space, within which there is no agenda or structure, and by the "stranger" group rule – this structure enables both containment and the analysis of transference patterns in the group (the transference level of analysis is considered the heart of group analysis by many). But other possible therapeutic factors – support, belonging, mirroring, exchange etc – these factors rely less on the above analytic conditions, and making meaning, less on linking past to present, there and then to here and now – but are nevertheless therapeutic. These factors can be harnessed to therapeutic effect.

In my view, a group-analytic training offers the most comprehensive, in-depth training and understanding of group process. In this regard, I think group analysts are in a privileged position to harness a full range of therapeutic factors and to mobilise therapeutic factors for groups with different aims, in different settings with different populations.

Adapting to changing times and contemporary clinical challenges in my view requires more explicit and considered modifications of group-analytic method. For the practitioner, the analytic group may be the most interesting, substantial and powerful therapeutic experience, but this does not mean that the group analyst can't or shouldn't work with groups more limited in aim and therapeutic potential, such as

psychoeducational groups, CBT groups, mentalizing groups etc. The method can be modified to enhance or limit different therapeutic potentialities eg for analytic work, for interpersonal feedback, for containment, for reality-testing etc. Training in adapting group-analytic method should I think be built into generic group-analytic training rather than split off exclusively into an applied section (though this may usefully be further developed in separate or additional trainings).

Concluding Remarks

I would like to return to the question “Can group analysis adapt to changing times? Is all group analysis applied group analysis?” At times of significant change there is often a move towards a more primitive, polarised, either/or mode of functioning. Currently there are anxieties and concerns in London that changes to the IGA training (to include a more skills-based focus early in the training), will somehow corrupt the potential and the purity of the group- analytic model. This echoes a time in the early 90’s when block training was first introduced in the UK in the form of the Manchester training and there were great anxieties about the corruption of group analysis. It is my view that group analysis is an applied discipline – it is the application of certain principles and basic assumptions, using a methodology, (creating a group-analytic situation), that can be adapted according to the task and the context. The strength of group analysis is in its creative adaptability and its identity is protected by its clearly defined basic assumptions and method.

Thank you.

Sylvia Hutchinson
April 2010

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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:

Group_Analytic Society
102 Belsize Road
London NW3 5BB
Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6611
Fax: +44 (0)20 7443 9576
e-mail: admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk

Events

Constructing and Mentalizing the Matrix

Speaker: Sigmund Karterud

Respondent: Peter Fonagy

Friday 13th May 2011 at 8.00pm

Matrix and mentalization refers to the work of S.H.Foulkes (and co-workers) in the post-war era, and that of P. Fonagy (and co-workers) in our time. How do these concepts relate to each other? In an evolutionary sense, the matrix is prior to mentalization.

Organized groups, with their bonds and communicational web between the members, existed before thinking. Moreover, interpretation of others probably evolved before the ability to interpret oneself. Thus, intergroup mentation seems also prior to intrapersonal mentation. When full mentalization (metacognitive interpretation) was acquired, by the rise of homo sapiens, the matrix itself could be thought of and recorded as a cultural capital.

Mentalizing the matrix has been a primary task for group analysts since the dawn of group analysis. By this I mean the effort to make sense of the tacit higher order phenomena that connect us and influence us for better and worse. In clinical practice, this attitude has to be attuned to the mentalizing capabilities of the group members. The lecture will elaborate the thesis that in groups for patients with borderline pathology, the therapist should construct the matrix to a larger extent than in other groups, and constantly mentalize it in the dialogue with the group members.

**Venue: The Brunei Gallery, SOAS
University of London
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG**

**Information and Bookings: Group Analytic Society. Tel.
+44(0)20 7435 6611. Fax: +44(0)20 7443 9576. E-mail: office@
groupanalyticsociety.co.uk**

Announcing

**THE FIFTEENTH G.A.S. TRIENNIAL
EUROPEAN**

GROUP-ANALYTIC SYMPOSIUM

CULTURES, CONFLICT AND CREATIVITY...

which will take place at

***GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE, in
NEW CROSS, LONDON, UK
AUGUST 29TH – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2011***

*The event is being organised by
THE GROUP-ANALYTIC SOCIETY (LONDON).
Symposium Sub-Committee Chairman: Kevin Power*

Group-analysis seeks to understand the many facets of culture. An analytic group has a culture, and so does a family, an organisation, a community and a society. We live in a time when cultures are increasingly interconnected while also striving for separate-ness to preserve identity. Most cultures are anxious about the global economy, climate change, and how to live together in the context of continuing wars, genocide and terrorism. Not only must we work with our personal conflicts but also with those that arise in interpersonal relationships, in organisations, and within and between societies and nations. How can the creativity of group-analysis respond to and work with this complex matrix of cultures and conflict?

Further Information and Booking:

*Please visit the GAS Website at <http://groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/>
And click on the Symposium 2011 link.*

IGA/GAS Film Group

All films are shown at The Institute of Group Analysis, 1 Daleham Gardens, London NW3 5BY (020 7431 2693)

Friday evenings Monthly – 7.30pm – 10.30pm (except 15th July 2011, which has a 7pm start)

Everyone welcome.

18th March 2011. My Father My Lord. Directed by David Volach (Israel 2007). A prize winning chamber piece about family life and challenges to faith within an orthodox community in Jerusalem. Discussion led by Dr Morris Nitsun, clinical psychologist, organisational consultant, training group analyst and author of 'The Group As Object of Desire' and 'The Anti-group'.

15th April 2011. The Hurt Locker. Directed by Katherine Bigelow (US 2009). Winner of six Oscars including Best Director and Best Picture, beautifully acted and directed and conveying a sense of the excitement and madness of young men fighting a war. A film about groups under pressure. Discussion led by Yana Stajno, filmmaker and scriptwriter.

20th May 2011. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas. Directed by Mark Herman (UK 2009). The second world war story of a tragic friendship between two boys from opposite sides, set in a concentration camp. Discussion led by John Woods, child psychotherapist and group analyst at The Portman Clinic.

17th June 2011. Dogtooth. Directed by Giorgos Lanthimos (Greece 2009). This disturbing film about a perversely dysfunctional family, which has echoes of the recent cases of family abuse documented in the press, won nine awards including Un Certain Regard at Cannes 2009. Discussion led by – Dr Kiriakos Xenitidis, group analyst and psychiatrist working with people who have a learning disorder.

16th Triennial European Symposium in Group Analysis 2014

Invitation to Tender for this prestigious event in Group Analysis and central event in the Calendar of the Group Analytic Society (London)

This is an invitation for Group Analytic Societies/ Institutes from all over Europe to tender for the 16th European Symposium in Group Analysis to take place in 2014.

Soon the 15th European Group Analytic Symposium will be held in London August 29th-September 2nd, 2011. It is the central event of the Group Analytic Society (London). The Dublin event in 2008 drew over 550 participants and London is planning for 600 group analysts and other professionals interested in group psychotherapy. It is intended to provide an extended period of time in order to meet and share theory, practice and experiential components, as well as to meet and socialise with old friends and colleagues, to make new acquaintances and to be inspired in one's work with groups.

The European Symposium has been held every third year since 1970, where the first took place in Estoril, Portugal. The tradition is to hold it in a different part of Europe each time. Among other places it has been held are Oxford (UK), Heidelberg (Germany), Copenhagen (Denmark), Budapest (Hungary), Bologna (Italy), Molde (Norway) and lately Dublin (Ireland). It is a joint venture between the local Society/Institute and the Group Analytic Society, London.

The application should give information about:

*Responsible chairperson
Responsible local organisation
Venue description
Accommodation
Travel information and access
Preliminary working title
Preliminary realistic budget*

*For further information and guidelines about the organisation,
economics and responsibilities*

Please contact the Society's e-mail address: groupanalytic.society@virgin.net

*Applications should be addressed to the President of GAS (London)
either by post or e-mail
and be at the Society Office by Thursday 17th March 2011
Gerda Winther, President*

Information About Conference Accommodation in London and Donations to the Society

Please see the GAS Website at:
<http://www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/>

