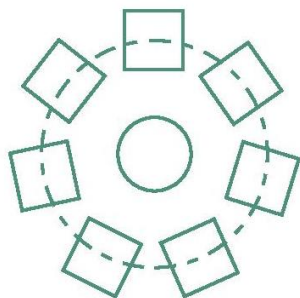


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial.....	3
President's Foreword.....	5
E-mail to the GASI Summer School 2015 participants and team members.....	10
The Programme of the Summer School in Prague.....	11
Thrills and Suspense - the Challenge of groups By Robi Friedman.....	12
Are Group Analysts Afraid of Groups? By Tija Despotović.....	23
Why should individual members be afraid to be in a group? By Marie Hošková.....	36
I'm Afraid of the Big Bad Group By Helena Klímová.....	51
Reports on the 2015 Summer School in Prague	
Di King.....	59
Helena Klímová.....	62
Elizabeta Popovic.....	65
Vagelis Thanellos.....	72
Leah Chaikin.....	84
Rushen Sevketoglu.....	87
Group Analytic Concepts: Ethics Compiled by Terry Birchmore.....	92
Citations and Abstracts of Articles in Other Journals Compiled by Terry Birchmore.....	97

2 *Group Analytic Society International – Contexts*

BOOK CORNER.....	101
Book review:	
Rob White reviews J. M. Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz's, <i>The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy</i>	
Request for Foulkes Letters and Documents	
Events.....	107
GAGA: Drawn by Isabel Cercos, Idea by Peter Zelaskowski.....	110
Contexts' Columnist: My World – You're Welcome to it By Derek Love.....	111

Editorial

I was in my late 20s (full of doubt and uncertainty about relationships, the world around me, my part in it, my teaching career, not really knowing myself, feeling beaten-up by Thatcherism...in need of an overhaul) when I first entered a group analytic group, invited by Tom Hamrogue to join a group which met in a quiet backroom of the IGA. I remember the tension on entering the room, the new kid in town, feeling myself quake, struggling to hold myself together, full of apprehension...no, I'll say it as it was...I was terrified!! I felt the eyes of the others scanning my presence, some directly, others with furtive sideways looks. I remember not wanting to let Tom down, he seemed calm and relaxed, with a glint of the great Irish comedian Dave Allen about him. He was so articulate and yet there I was barely able to mumble my name when asked. For months I barely said a thing, I was petrified - literally turned to stone - and yet at the same time, something stirred within me and not too gradually either, I was becoming enthralled, desperate to join in and become a part of the group's life.

I'm saying this now by way of introducing this issue of Contexts, which, apart from some regular features, is entirely dedicated to the second GASi Summer School which took place in Prague during a heatwave in July of this year. The theme of the gathering, which I was fortunate enough to be invited to join as a member of the international staff team, was our fear of groups, a theme which quickly caused me to return to, during the course of the event, those early experiences, my primary experience of group induced primal fear, here briefly related. The composition of the 60 plus group attending the summer school was a striking blend of mostly students, relatively new to group analysis, alongside a significant number of grizzled and highly experienced matrix hardened veterans. Our Czech colleagues welcomed us warmly, despite the obvious state of shock, brought about by the very recent death of their friend and colleague Marie Hošková – a theme which pervades the fascinating and varied reports on the Summer School included here.

In addition, this issue includes the four papers which were written for the Summer School. Robi Friedman, as the President of GASi, welcomed people to the Summer School with his paper on thrills and suspense in the group, themes which connected powerfully to the

great sense of nervous excitement and anticipation that filled the room, as we were all looking about at the others there with us at the very start of this new community. Tija Despotović, from a deeply personal telling of her family story, helps us understand her own development as a group analyst, the internal conflicts embedded in her own “internal society” having lived through the frightening disintegration of Yugoslavia. Marie Hošková, who gave us the title of the Summer School (Who’s Afraid of Groups?) elaborates the “primitive paranoid” fear of the wolf in the group, the member who will eat us. She takes us through an extended example of a group in which these fears are present but in which, by the end, the opposite occurs. Finally, Helena Klímová describes the two major “big bad groups” of her life in Czechoslovakia: the Nazis and the communist regime and their part in the evolution of what she calls a “false collective self”.

I hope this issue serves as a rich reminder of those days in Prague for those who were there, as well as, for those who weren’t, a stimulating insight into this important new event in the GA calendar.

Peter Zelaskowski

President's Foreword

The idea that Group Analytic students could come together and enjoy a place of interchange was converted into action for the first time two years ago in Belgrade. About 40 foreign and local students of group analytic therapy gathered for 4 days. They interacted around different areas of interest: every day there were small and large groups, a lecture, supervisions and...a lot of time to have significant encounters with students of other group analytic Institutes. This same kind of meeting happened now again, in Prague, with the wonderful background of the centre of this beautiful City...actually only a 10 minute walk away.

This time there were about 60 members and the team organizing it had already learned some lessons from the first Summer School. Regine Scholz and David Glynn, together with one of the Serbian organizers, Tija Despotovic, co-organized with a Czech team this second Summer School. Local organizing forces, like our long year member Helena Klimova, were of great help in the organization of the Summer School. Unexpectedly, the organization chair, Marie Hošková, died just a week before the event. The fact that the whole Summer School program continued successfully seems to give evidence to the strength and resilience of the organizers' team. The feedback to the program, the staff and the group was very positive. I can only say we are delighted and proud to have had such an event and we are just waiting for the next one. The articles, lectures and essays are the reports and testimony for the different perspectives on this conference. The Summer School will not take place in the summer when a Symposium takes place, but the plan is that the Group Analytic Society (International) continues to organize Summer Schools – for as long as we can foresee. We have still to provide assistance for the Summer Schools' finances. But we struggle to keep the prices low, and we think it important that the many young members of different International Institutes come together for an exchange – in a group analytic manner. Our Society should help this endeavour financially – it is a good investment in the present and future. Not-so-young and veteran group analysts have also participated and are heartily invited. In the two Summer Schools the mingling between young and older analyst showed great advantages.

Next summer's Summer School will be organized in Athens. Greek group analysts will invite all those who are willing to participate in such a creative and productive young international exchange. I think Internationalization is an important aim!

Dr Robi Friedman

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Be a Contexts Writer!

“Substitute “damn” every time you’re inclined to write “very”; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be”. Mark Twain

Contexts welcomes contributions from GAS members and non-members on a variety of topics: Have you run or attended a group-analytic or group psychotherapy workshop? Are you involved in a group-analytic or group psychotherapy 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 5,000 words long, or between one and ten A4 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, a reply to an earlier article published here, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

Articles are welcome from all those who work with groups in any discipline: whether practitioners, trainers, researchers, users, or consultants. Accounts of innovations, research findings on existing practice, policy issues affecting group therapy, and discussions of conceptual developments are all relevant. Group therapy with clients, users, professional teams, or community groups fall within our range.

Length: Full length articles; of up to 5,000 words, should show the context of practice and relate this to existing knowledge. We also accept brief contributions which need focus only on the issue at hand: brief descriptions, reviews, personal takes of workshops or events attended, humorous asides, letters and correspondence.

Presentation: articles, letters, etc. should ideally be in Word format and forwarded as an email attachment to the Editors.

Please don't worry about language, grammar and the organisation of your piece. We, as editors, receive many pieces from non-English speaking countries and it is our job to work with you to create a piece of writing that is grammatical and reads well in English. This help also extends to English speakers who may need help and advice about the coherence and organisation of a piece of work.

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!

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GAS International New Members

Mr Gerhard Bliersbach

Full member, Germany

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Born 1945, studied Psychology, Sociology, and Philosophy at the University of Cologne. Finished his studies in 1971. For 10 years, CEO of a research institute in Cologne doing mainly research in traffic psychology. Approved psychotherapist. Worked for 30 years in a psychiatric and psychotherapeutic hospital, conducting mainly groups of different sizes and settings. For the same time, author of numerous articles in West German (mainly) journals as well as in newspapers. Recent book “Nachkriegskino” which deals with the West German Cinema of the period from 1946 to 1963. Married, two stepsons and one daughter.

To the GASI Summer School 2015 participants and team members:

E-mail communication sent the week before the
Summer School

Dear Colleagues,

It is our very sad responsibility to bring to you the following news: our dear friend, respected colleague and our team chair-person Marie Hošková passed away on July 5th 2015. Her illness was unexpected, fast and she was only 60 years old, with loving a mutually caring family; and she was expecting her new grandchild...

It was Marie's natural gift - the ability of caring for others. Marie grew up as the first born of ten siblings in a family which was unique in more aspects. It was one of the families which at that time were representing the protest against the totalitarian regime, the protest based (in this case) on spiritual values; after the revolution in the time of new beginnings Marie's mother represented catholic values as a member of parliament.

Marie was accustomed to feel responsibility for others since her early childhood and she did it in her noble, non-aggressive and gentle way. The profession of a psychotherapist was the most appropriate and her patients whom she was treating as psychoanalyst and group-analyst proceeded to health in the most natural way. She was highly respected among colleagues, too.

We were feeling safe and well taken care for as members of Marie's team, she used to inspire us with her dedication and her good will. She succeeded to assemble a group of people who liked to meet and work together, she was our respected and beloved inspirer.

It would be her wish that the GASI Summer School meets and creates and finally leaves the lasting imprint of truthful and kind human relations.

Her funeral is on Monday 20th July 2015.

**Members of the Czech organizing team of the GASI
Summer School, Prague**

12th July 2015

GASi Summer School Programme

Prague, 15th– 19th July, 2015

Wednesday:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 15.00 – 17.00 | Arrival and Registration |
| 17.00 – 18.00 | Opening Lecture Robi Friedman
'Thrills and Suspense – the Challenge of meeting' |
| 18.30 – 20.00 | Large Group – conducted by Helena Klímová and David Glyn |
| 20.00 | Welcome Drinks |

Thursday, Friday and Saturday

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 9.00 – 10.30 | Small Group |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Coffee |
| 11.00 – 11.45 | Lecture – Lecturers: Tija Despotovic, Helena Klímová and Marie Hošková |
| 11.45 – 12.30 | Discussion Group |
| 12.30 – 14.00 | Lunch |
| 14.00 – 15.30 | Supervision/Peer Groups* |
| 15.30 – 16.00 | Coffee |
| 16.00 – 17.30 | Large Group – conducted by Helena Klímová and David Glyn |

Saturday evening: Party!

Sunday

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 9.00 – 10.30 | Small Group |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Coffee |
| 11.00 – 12.30 | Large Group |
| 12.30 – 13.00 | Close School |

* For those not wishing to attend Supervision, there will be daily Peer groups

Thrills and Suspense - the Challenge of groups

The dynamics of meeting (and avoiding meetings).

By Robi Friedman

Thrills and Suspense (see Balint: Thrills and Regression 1959)

Every group is a challenge; it is a ‘space’ where something ‘good’ or something ‘frightening’ or ‘dangerous’ can happen. In joining a group – even a group you choose, a group with the promise of a kind of relative safety – the chances are that there is some tension involved.

This is one of the significant differences to a couple-relationship. Dyads contain a conscious and unconscious promise to create an existential safe space. Only for very short periods of time you approach your sister, your friend or therapist in order to find thrills and suspense when there is an open conflict. Actually, in order for a relation of tension to continue to exist, the group has to be part of a continuous ‘matrix’ (like a culture, a family matrix, an appointed committee, a long standing working place). The group must be helped to keep the meeting going. Unless the situation is ‘held’ by a significant-enough matrix, the participants will eventually avoid the meetings. The unconscious dynamic of this process is: dyads reproduce the most secure earliest mother child dynamics, whereas groups create less secure relations.

Let us go back to meeting this group and the tensions. Why even here we feel tension? Let’s try to understand these dynamics also through your own experience: why is it, that some of you come to this workshop here in Prague with some apprehension, some tension and/or the opposite, thrilled to know the group or to get known in the group?

One answer is: we come into the group matrix with our individual matrix (Foulkes, 1973). The individual matrix is usually something created by the experiences in the early family matrix together with later life experiences. After attaching to our mothers (and fathers), the ability to go through some kind of triangulation has to be developed. Here, for many, some kind of new emotional movement comes in: sometimes it looks like ‘separation anxiety’, for others it is “longing for the centre” and an effort to be salient or dominant in the group.

In the unconscious motor in groups, the heirs of the early separation anxiety are exclusion and rejection dynamics, while dominance in the group is the heir of being *primus inter pares* – for example Mommy's or Daddy's favourite. These often unconscious feelings are responsible for your tensions and thrills.

Thus, coming to the group with our individual matrix means that we will be almost compulsively repeating former experience of discrepancies between needs and habits and the new reality. Sometimes repetition is in the hope that we will 'learn from (good) experience' (Bion, 1963) or, at least, repeating in order to start a change process, which has had many descriptions. For example: Balint, in the cited book, described Humans as divided by two relations categories: either trying to achieve security by stable relations in stable settings through minimum movement – he called them 'Octophils' – or those who are thrilled to move maximally between places and people in order to feel better. It's possible to consider change as a journey between repetition in relations and, as John Schlapobersky (2015) described recently in the last Foulkes lecture, moving through relations through reflection and reparation: the '3 Rs'.

But, until we go through this process, we will consciously, and mainly unconsciously, feel the same feelings we already know: expectations from men or women in the group, thrilled when a nice man or woman looks at us and in suspense, if our fixed ideas about the young ones, the older ones and our own 'personal' approach to the conductor of the group are in line with the group's norm. Even before the first word in the group is spoken, there will be a lot of fantasies connected to exclusion or inclusion in the group. Such fantasies have a double function: they are both the result of our relationship history, and they co-create our future relationships. Co-creating means, it doesn't stop at the fantasies and will shape the reality of our relationship. By representing our past history, they influence the perception of the here-and-now. Some of us call them 'projections' or 'transference' – which are all fantasies which give some slight twist to reality. Past experience influences the present and future relations. William Faulkner, the Nobel Prize winner for Literature, in *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) said: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." (Act 1, sc. 3.). It has been endlessly quoted in social and political contexts and has strong relevance for individuals.

Working in Group Analysis makes us aware that we have partners to these fantasies, and they contribute to the co-creation of new situations. So, if I have a rather anxious approach to the group – what will be the other's response? What will be their resonance to my anxiety or my thrill?

Approaching a group – longing, or the act of “belonging”

There may be as many approaches to the group as there are participants. Some come to the group with a tactic: first I do this, then I try to do that and then I will make it. Or else, they look around in the first moments of a group and try to find a partner who seems good-willed enough to provide some security or acknowledgement. Here again we may have the repetition of the promise inherent in the first mother/child dyad: whenever we feel tension, we naturally call for “mommy”, never for “parents” or “brothers”. Generally speaking, if we are distressed, in our fantasy we go to a single partner or create a small subgroup, or as Bion said: we start ‘pairing’. This seems quite natural. Any other approach to coping with thrills and suspense in ‘longing’ for a group will have to wait for a development.

The deeper we understand this emotional movement into the group, it becomes clearer that the wish to belong, and the fear of rejection are the main sources of thrill and suspense.

Why is belonging so important in the dynamic of group participation? Is the group an “object of Desire”? The patient who wants to come to therapy in order to learn how others cope with alone-ness, with despair and with depression, comes to the group as to a space of enrichment where he desires to cure his hunger and thirst. Belonging to a group seems both a necessity, because teams achieve what individuals cannot do alone, but they may be more than only efficient. Belonging to groups may be a defence against annihilation anxiety and a wish for glory. An example of a wish to be part of thrills is the Jihadist who wants to be part of ISIS: he wants to be part of the glory, maybe even the fantasy of the future ‘chosen glory’ Vamik Volkan talks about. He wants to belong to the winners, to the Just, to the friends of God. He wants to do what his Imam preached, what his father asked from him. By being part of a Matrix and by sensing

himself contributing to its function, he starts entering into the process of attaching to the group.

Suspense and thrills are also often connected to the group's 'topography', the location the participant feels in belonging to the group: is he/she marginal, is he/she central? I differentiate between exclusion and rejection: in exclusion the participant is marginalized but still part of the group, while in rejection he is being ejected from the group. Being excluded from the centre to the margins in a group is a situations which can be thrilling and full of suspense and tensions, because we are never really completely sure of our place in the group. We are all familiar with exclusion feelings from triangulation situations in the family –human's psychological fate is to develop and cope with the suffering which is a part of being excluded. One may speculate if this ability to live under some kind of exclusion is the real meaning of 'health', because exclusion can make you sick, but on the other hand you grow while overcoming it. If exclusion is chronic, and in a group or community there is no possibility for a marginalized individual or subgroup to struggle for a better place, I call it the 'Exclusion Relation Disorder'. This chronic social condition usually connects with some difficult symptoms, such as anxiety and depression.

Rejection is a completely different issue: it has to do with existential fears. If someone is either thought to be 'unfit' for the group or feels unfit him/herself, it can be a source for endless tension and anxieties. Fearing being left alone, or worse - not efficient enough or not identified enough with the main aims of the group - may consciously and unconsciously be equal to big dangers. Rejection is connected especially with selection, which means you may be expelled from the group, and on some unconscious level, it will really mean that you are expelled from the community and society. The unspoken promise of the family, that there may be exclusion but no rejection is not valid in groups – I will come back to it in the end. This difference puts some participants under growing stress, the less intimate and larger the groups are. The feelings here are not any more thrills or suspense but strong annihilation anxieties, fantasies and fears from violent attacks which often result in pathologic identification and identity processes. The worst of this kind of process is to become a scapegoat, and while not everyone is scapegoated in his life, most of us here have witnessed scapegoating processes. The fear of being rejected

and scapegoated is universal, and no human is exempt from this – even if you are the queen of the class for the last 10 years, you know you can yourself be scapegoated in just a moment! Becoming a scapegoat leaves deep scars. But what about the scars in the scapegoater?

Suspense and thrills are strongly connected to the group's efficiency principle, which is partly responsible for the 'topography' of the group. Although there are societies where you sit on the top or on the bottom by birth-right (for example in the UK or closed communities), in a normal group which has to achieve something (like playing classical music, playing soccer, or working on your problematic patterns), if you are not efficient enough, if you don't play well enough, act well enough or have the right kind of insights, you and the others will feel that you don't contribute enough to the group: you will hurt the efficiency principle in the group. You will be in suspense toward every group, and not thrilled at all.

Though, there are things we cannot do alone and we very often need more than two or three others. We need a small group, and for social purposes we need a large group, in the sense of Vamik Volkan's "big tent". To keep the next neighbourhood from attacking us, we need a mass of many, many brothers and sisters to protect us. And also in the large group we have thrills and anxieties.

Foulkes said: 'humans are first group members and only then individuals'. And Bion said: 'humans are group animals'. But what did Foulkes mean? He thought we are so influenced by the group and by the social matrix that we only develop an individual mind later if we work at it. I interpret it: we are so social, so deeply identified with our matrix that we can't really be only independent. This strong dependency and identification with the matrix may be the biggest insult for humans who idealize individuality. Is this social insult even bigger than the insult which is our unconscious, or are both insulting because they really mean we don't have the autonomy we hoped to have? We can't ever be developed, analysed and conscious-enough, because the matrix will be stronger.

EXAMPLE 1: a patient 'changes' in individual therapy, but consistently fails to fulfil this change in (the class) groups and in society.

EXAMPLE 2: In WW2, in Germany all these very analysed people 'lost their (individual) Mind', as I describe in the Soldiers' Matrix (Friedman, 2015).

Is there a way out? I think we cope with the influence of the matrix if we engage in group work, both in small and large groups. Working in groups provides for something unique – the group’s setting being “the” only space you can work on these issues. I have learned that participating in the large group is something that gives us unique possibilities to cope with the pressures of the mass, those total situations with fundamental non-verbal character and questions of external and inner authority. We also cope with situations where we experience difficulties to reflect and understand, but they still may provide space to practice our positions under great emotional pressure and repair them if we chose.

Now, if you find yourself in a large group (often not in your first ones, which may also be evidence of a developmental process large group participants undergo) being thrilled and in suspense, you seem to be working your way through a unique space. And if you are not filled with existential anxieties or with strong defence mechanisms, you seem to be doing well.

Stages of the Group

Yvonne Agazarian (1994) researched groups’ development, especially in groups which start and end together, like here in the Summer School in Prague, and she found three main steps: a) leader centred; b) group centred; c) working group.

In the leader-centred phase there is a process of “flight”, meaning everyone seems to be quite rule abiding and dependent on the system (some are anti-dependent). This is followed by “fight”, because the group’s culture fills itself with anger and struggle over power and differences between members or/and with the leadership.

In the second phase it gradually becomes a group-centred feeling, with a lot of cohesion at first and idealizing the group itself; afterwards the group goes through a painful de-idealization phase.

Only by going through the whole process can we become a “working group” as the third phase.

While these processes do not necessarily always happen, I still find them very common in human relations in general, including groups. Even in group-analytic therapy groups, where groups work many years in continuity, some of this processes occur. Without doubt, every turn in this process can engender a lot of suspense and also thrills. That’s why work with groups is so interesting!

Thrills and suspense of the group conductor

The group's space is an open communication network – even if it is a totalitarian regime. Everyone is a nodal point. Is the conductor a different nodal point? Maybe a larger nodal point? Maybe one who concentrates everything on himself? Once, in Bucharest under Ceausescu in 1978, I saw a huge board advertising about 200 lectures with hundreds of references, but only by the same one person: Ceausescu!

The therapist is on the alert and under suspense all the time - why? Although Group Analysis is about facilitating the group participants' communication and helping to translate the groups' unconscious relations, the conductor is under the emotional influence of the group. Like on everyone else, the group's interaction has an impact on the conductor's own tendencies. For example the unconscious meeting between the conductor's approach to 'leadership' and the group's wish to have a leader, e.g. that they admire, may engender thrilling moments of ecstasy. If the admiration weakens for any reason or if the therapist makes the 'mistake' of frustrating the needs of the group, he may be in great suspense. He will ask himself: will I be able to continue to conduct the group? In group analytic therapy groups, we try to become "conductors" more than being "leaders" who have a much less central place. Actually, this may be one of the most difficult moments for the therapist, even if he is very experienced or sure of himself. Sometimes, conducting groups is all about the tolerance of suspense, of coping with extreme situations, with aggressions, with the failure to be part of, or of feelings of being used or even misused.

When do I feel good as a conductor? The answer is: when I am part of a group where I feel it's possible to make mistakes. The tension rises if I feel that my mistakes cannot be tolerated or if I experience this process as very destructive; I will even ask myself if I have to leave my leadership position. As I said before: rejection and the feeling of 'not being efficient enough' are big sources of tension, likewise for the therapists. Thus the conductor can go from the thrills of success, when he actually secures his own place in the group, to the place of suspense, if he fails. For me it is important to convey that this is what is implied in "thrills and suspense", and both are emotional situations we finally love and give us the gist of professional life. Still, both the fascination and the difficulty of these situations have their roots in the emotions which working with some of the

darkest and deepest human relational emotions awakens in us. This is a most demanding profession.

For the group analytic conductor it seems that the main movement in the group dynamics is to go through thrills and suspense until they are eventually “part of the group”, and cause fewer tensions. This reduction of the tensions in the conductor and usually also in the group may enable improved resonance and responses to the group. Paradoxically, if thrills and suspense are very high, the ability to be “with the group and in the group” is much smaller than when you are calm. In Bion’s words – only with lower levels of thrills and suspense can you meet patients “without desire, without understanding and without knowledge”. In my fantasy, the group is like a musical instrument, let’s say a guitar, which, when the thrills and suspension are at the highest, cannot really be optimally tuned. But one may say that the instrument is now resonating other very important issues, and the guitar sounds different then. Thus, there is a balance between tension and open-minded and open-hearted therapeutic activity and thrills and suspense, and we probably move all the time, too-and-fro.

Undoubtedly, the challenges in the group, like the multitude of voices, the different music, the unconscious movements between extremes, will always be a source of suspense and thrills. That is why working with groups is so interesting and so exciting.

Differences between the small group (SG) and the large group (LG)

Finally, I want to share with you some of my thoughts on significant differences between small and large groups. Why are we usually so full of suspense in the LG? While individual therapy or counselling unconsciously relies on the promise of the mother-child relationship, the SG repeats the feelings and promises of the family organization. The LG builds emotionally on a different level, and it cores (?) dynamic distances itself from these feelings and promises. Participating in the LG means losing the mother-child total protection, and while voices, which long for the familiar containment, are always there, many understand that it may be an illusion. In the LG we are never completely understood, let alone acknowledged in the same way – and it shakes our inner world; the LG attacks our inner illusions, which are defences against social annihilation anxieties.

Belonging is so strong a need that we have ‘psychotic’ or at least not realistic attitudes towards the small group/family dramas, where there will be no rejection, no ejection from the group. Biblical Hagar, (Ismael’s mother) who was sent out pregnant into the desert, or Oedipus, who was sent to die in the woods, tell the story of what we really fear. The usual family gives the message: no matter what you are, you will be a loved part of the family, and this promise is alive in most of humans, no matter how deceiving reality was.

The LG offers nothing of this kind – something in you knows, that you could be expelled or denigrated, run over by the mass or scapegoated by a bully or the group leader. The mere feeling of being surrounded by so many unknown and maybe unfriendly people, all of whom seem able to influence everybody else with their depression, anger or frustration makes this situation unsafe. In the familiar small group the known ‘small feelings’ make it easier to ‘free associate’. In the first phases of the LG many participants may find very little freedom to communicate, and seem always to be aware of unspoken struggles with forces bigger than you. Complaining is inherent in the culture of the LG beginnings of sessions, and may not be really connected with any content but rather reflect the individual’s fear that the organization, the LG, is threatening and victimizing us, the small participants.

“Me and thou” is a common communicative start, but in the LG the “thou” is a huge number of partly untrustworthy people. Actually you may feel that the mass doesn’t always know how to behave and can get violent. Large Groups in totalitarian systems, angry demonstrations and other large crowds are always on the verge of losing control. No wonder that paranoia in LG makes participants feel less thrilled and more in suspense. Fearing others who seem to have power to impose their will is a cornerstone of the LG. So we can easily say: no LG without paranoia.

It may be enormously therapeutic for the individual and useful for the organization to hold and contain a process which enables participants to know themselves in the LG; it also helps to understand better their tensions as well as their relation to the conductor, to the organization. As I said before: I think, the LG may be the only space which provides for this kind of meeting, because no other setting challenges you in this way. Many first time participants don’t understand the space and function of the LG. Instead of using the space for learning

about themselves and their relationship with society, they spend much energy and time longing for the intimacy of the dyad and the promises of the SG. Of course, the strong transpersonal emotional movement in the LG powerfully influences the conductor's opinions and feelings.

EXAMPLE: Some weeks ago I led a large group in a Berlin conference. After a session and into the second one I felt, that there was a very important process going on: people from many places in Europe came to Berlin, as if it was the best part, kind of the good breast of Germany, in order to be cured and to cure the Germans.

“Berlin” had formerly, 80 years ago, rejected or attacked the parents and grand-parents of all those people. Not so long ago, their fathers and grandmothers were on the verge of extermination, and a vast number of others were dead. A war started in which millions of all sides died. Since then, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Belgians, Norwegians, Englishmen and others from many other countries have had a ‘sick’ and disordered relationship with Germany: they hated “the Germans”. Representing the extreme of this relations, now in this Berlin conference the Jews were the ‘containing’ group (playing on Agazarian, 1994), who symbolized both former rejection, hate and sick relationship but also the present ‘return’ to Germany. It was the kind of meeting you can only have in the LG, where on the other side of this disordered and sick relation the rejecters have been rejected by the world. They were the children of the perpetrators who were delegated with the process of feeling terrible guilt and shame for these last 2 generations or more, internationally hated and despised themselves, meeting the formerly rejected. The scapegoating process started now to reverse and to heal, because haters want also to get rid of the poison in their soul.

Together with Siri Johns, my Norwegian co-conductor of the LG, I got the feeling that this long ‘poisonous journey’, which started in the late twenties in Europe, was meant to be healed now in Berlin. The Jewish/Israeli participants were a surprising 20% of the participants, eager to connect to a changed Berlin and the transformed Berliners, together with Poles, French, English and others; the Germans were eager to re-integrate them. As I tried to ask questions in order to understand something about this “re-belonging as a cure”, I felt the tension and suspension of uttering the unspeakable. I felt the thrill of a possible ‘new beginning’, as Balint (1968) would have put it, but at

the same time the anxiety of being disastrously mistaken in my belief. The beginning responses of some Israelis and other participants hinted to the worst scenario possible. I said something which deviated from the normal thinking that something bad will happen.

Although there were many who wanted to get into the process of thinking and becoming aware of these issues, the conductors felt shut up. I was thrilled to have felt so close to what I considered a deep understanding, but felt ‘in suspense’ because of the powerful dialogue in the group - and rightly so. The Large Group and I/we, the conductors, felt in a tense conflict with the result, that for a long moment I felt that everything I understood was wrong, and my security was momentarily suspended. It took me 20 minutes to find my voice again. But more than ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, there were thrills and suspense.

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Are Group Analysts Afraid of Groups?

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The inspiration for the thoughts brought to this paper came to me while I was listening to Sue Einhorn, during the first GASI Summer School two years ago in Belgrade. I admired Sue's thoughtfulness and openness and the way she discovered and described the development of her group analytic identity, her love and hate for groups, that linked me to my own path of becoming a group analyst, my love for groups as well as my fear of groups.

Part one

Paradoxically, it seems to me natural, unavoidable, but at the same time unbelievable that I had chosen to become a group analyst, to conduct therapy and teaching groups for years, and participate as a member of different groups being passionate about both roles. In my youth although I was an accepted member of different peer groups, I feared not being really seen or recognized with my own feelings and attitudes. I had a vague idea that I was not able to belong to any group. Later I learned that anxiety in/of a group is a human primal fear. The fears of not belonging, being excluded, not accepted or isolated are existential in their nature because we cannot survive without the group.

While being a student of medicine interested in psychiatry I was invited to be a member of one experiential and experimental group that was conducted by my respected professor, for a year. At that time I certainly wouldn't think that I would ever become a group therapist (analyst) facing the fact that for a whole year I didn't say anything that was relevant for me, that really mattered. I wanted so much to be part of that group, I was regular, but actually was fighting with my "groupish" nature by avoiding exploring contents of my own mind and how that could relate to others. I wanted to be seen but I did not let anybody to see me. Somehow I perceived (or had a phantasy) that my professor let me stay in that role and I helped him to deal with other members' anxieties and problems. Today I know that although he was a good and respected professor, he was not a group analyst who could discover the collusion between me and the group and my position as his "assistant". My fear of the group was invisible. I was

not able to trust him and the group that there was enough space for me (and probably I wanted the whole space) and I withdrew. Just to mention that I took the same position in that group as in my own family.

But without that very first experience I would never know my response to a group of strangers. Much later I learned how the group analytic situation brings into operation parts of the interpersonal unconscious as well as the individual unconscious. It has to do with my family experience and I will return to my family a bit later. And, without that experience I might never understand the silent member in the groups I conducted much later.

Without acknowledging the internal conflicts or internal society within us, as well as our complex, conflictual nature in interpersonal relationships, it seems we are not at all in a position to create a common space with others and use it for sharing verbally and emotionally what is important for us, nor to belong to the group.

After my first awkward experience in a group I didn't give up the idea of finding understanding and "answers" for my burdened mind, and as a young psychiatrist I found the training in Group Analysis. I felt that Group Analysis found me. It was an international Training (IGA London) but held in Belgrade, which was very important for me and in tune with the idea conceived in my childhood from my parents, to connect with the wider world and knowledge. It was a long and painful but joyful experience that brought new perspectives to my professional attitudes and I changed through it and became freer. I believe that among other advantages I became a more real self, who as a little child loved groups genuinely and was concerned for other people's feelings and thoughts.

Group Analysis opened my thirst to get to know more about internal processes. I entered into the realm of Psychoanalysis too.

Freud stated that individual psychology is also social psychology. There is a natural connection in groups (1921) which promotes a mental state that is based on sharing and being in harmony with others, rather than based on conflicts. Foulkes stated that the essence of man is social, consciously and unconsciously. He had a pregnant idea that the individual is an abstraction, a nodal point in network of interplay between ground and figure, context and the content, of inside and outside and of disturbance being located between people (Brown, 2006). Bion (1961) stated that the individual is a group animal who is

at war, not simply with the group, but with himself for being a group animal, and with those aspects of his personality that constitute his 'groupishness' - that could quite easily be lost and converted to the idea that the individual is at war with the group.

However, I would like to return to home, in Winnicott's words, the place where we all start from.

I decided here to expose myself with these parts of my personal history (what I never did in my entire professional life) to try to explore the idea of the anxieties and fears of us, conductors of groups. What are we afraid of? Do we differ from people that are coming to us for their therapies? Who is the one who will become the group analyst? The one who has no fears of a group or in a group? Or the one who has the courage and drive to work through them? Does our history (usually difficult and painful) run through our paths to live with and alleviate the pains of others? Moreover, are we, group analysts, such human beings at war with ourselves, trying to work with those who struggle with similar wars?

I was born in the mid-fifties; a decade after the Second World War. That was a time when the reconstruction of a ruined country and the building of "a better society" was going on in Yugoslavia, and elsewhere, and when equality, unity of diversities, brotherhood, development of social care and education were parts of my parents' attitudes. I remember that as a small child I felt joy belonging to the group, the big family group or children's group. I remember their joy too. I found, not long ago, the letter that my father wrote near the end of his short life to my mother that the most important thing in his life was his love for her and the children, love for his work and love for his country. It reflects the values of his generation to both belong to the family (small) group, as well as the country (large) group, which was more than the nation.

Today I believe that the group values that I found in my parents' societal attitudes, an interchangeable figure and ground, through my own experience in my early group life, became an internalized image of the group, the group ideal (Freud, 1921) or, the group in the mind (Jaques, 1955). I believe that the group in my mind led me to find Group Analysis which opened me to the mystery of psychotherapy in, and by the group of strangers, and brought more understanding to the root groups, as Foulkes named fundamental groups, especially the family group, responsible for the mental health of the individual.

My parents, taking into account their nation, geographical region, religion, political attitudes, and history, originate from entirely different backgrounds...but with many similarities.

When he completed his religious education, my father continued in education to become a teacher, instead of starting to practice as a priest which was what was expected of him. He met Marxists as scholar, at his young age in the multinational, multi-confessional boiling society of Bosnia, at that time part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. He became a communist, abandoned religious tradition, with deep beliefs in the possibility of building a fair society, internationalism (he learned Esperanto) and he joined the Partizans when the war started, together with his older sister and his younger brother who were killed during the war.

As the youngest of six sisters my mother was living a city life in the same state but in Serbia, in a patriarchal, traditional family which respected the royal regime. Her parents died at an early age, after an economic crisis when their family business collapsed. The oldest sister married and adopted her five younger sisters and they continued their family life supporting each other for their entire life, placing family at a highest place above all values. They struggled for survival during the war, strongly attached to each other.

Nonetheless, I remember that despite those difficult histories, the stories of the war in my family were often coloured by humour. For example, during the bombing the most important thing in my mother's family was to find the deaf cousin, who couldn't hear and didn't care about danger. Another was that my grandmother (father's mother) saved her own life when persecuted at the door of her house by fascists; she pretended that she was praying.

My parents found each other after the end of war conflict. Their love and marriage overrode the restrictions and doubts of both families. My father soon became a lovable brother-in-law, and my mother seemed to be accepted by my grandmother when the family reunited. My sister's memories are in tune with mine: our parent's relationship was based on full sense of mutual concern.

The acknowledgment of them as a couple reflected the mood of the time, in which diversities were celebrated at a large group level. If it hadn't been like that, for many reasons they would have reminded me of the Romeo and Juliet of Shakespeare's play.

"They find each other in the middle of an unknowing crowd and by their love transform the meaningless atemporality of the crowd into personal meaning and transcendence that corresponds to the longing of every member of the large group. In fact, it corresponds to universal longings. In another respect, the couple that in its love relationship overcomes the aggression of the group and fulfils an ideal of the group itself." (Kernberg, 1890)

One of the main tasks of all individuals, and of the society as a whole after the war was to deal with traumatic losses, through the mourning process. But the losses were so huge at large, that the mourning process, I believe, was mantled by the enthusiasm of building the "new world". Part of it could be the denial of aggression in the course of the idealization of love and brotherhood. Individual and cultural histories were interacting at all levels.

That was the context at the level of the large social group when my father became ill and died. The family world fell to pieces. The mourning process was long (if it ever ended) and at once the issues of different religions appeared. The atheistic attitudes turned into accusations on religious grounds. The fear that the children would be influenced by "other" religion appeared. It was obvious that paranoid as a defence against depressive anxieties were around for a while. Were family members protecting themselves by regression from madness being unable to endure psychic pain? From young age I was aware of the irrationality of those disputes and felt my mother's and my grandmother's sadness and despair. It seemed as if religious loyalties overrode family loyalties, despite beliefs that all religions promoted family values. But even then, I was vaguely aware that unbearable pain was central. Nowadays I understand how difficult demand of reality was to separate from lost love object when there were so many yet unmourned losses in family.

The natural division of the family (which actually was an extended family) happened after a certain period of time. But at that time it looked like splitting for the psychic survival of all members. I think that I took the position of going between the two entities, which was going on literally. But I felt huge anger toward all adults for their inability to understand how it is when you naturally understand and accept differences, and love them. Despite my anger, my internal family group survived. Fortunately, it survived in external reality too, because the members of my family were able as the mourning process

was going on, to repair their relationships and forgive the senseless accusations to a certain extent, as people favour and forgive family members before they do others (Pinker, 1997).

Foulkes stated that groups elicit curiosity, hostility and fear of differences - which was congruent with my experience. He believed in the healthy capacity of a group and its healing character. Group analysis had much to contribute to the understanding of full relationships with real concern within them, with similarities and differences acknowledged. But, it is impossible to find common understanding and tolerate differences if members are overwhelmed by sadness, jealousy, envy, rivalry, and do not find a way to communicate and co-create the ground for the development of a group's members. There is a necessity to communicate and work through the fears of disintegration and annihilation anxieties, which appear for different reasons and in different contexts in group life.

Insanity in the individual is rare, but in groups, parties, nations and epochs it is the rule. (Nietzsche, F., Aphorism 156 in *Beyond Good and Evil*)

At a large group level, under certain circumstances the potential for love and concern for others, as the noblest moral motives, become unavailable. That experience I witnessed and was part of in early 90s, while disintegration and war in Yugoslavia with bloody consequences were going on. A combination of unmourned losses at level of whole society, paranoid leadership, the domination of paranoid anxieties and the context of particular historical circumstances paved the way toward social madness, war and terror which led to the murderous expression of aggression and dehumanization.

At that time I was training as group analyst. Again I found myself feeling deeply desperate (like a child) but this time it was a real war at the level of society, not only threats or phantasies of disintegration and annihilation anxieties. Hate was everywhere, mostly between those who belong to different nations, different religious or ideological attitudes. And I felt hate toward those who hated. During those turbulent years I was against Milosevic but not for the disintegration of Yugoslavia, identifying or idealizing it as an entity capable of embracing differences. I found co-thinkers who remained capable of thinking and maintaining their individuality, because the possibility for individuality is inherent in the group. It was part of large (social) group processes to notice envious attacks and resentments toward

those parts of society who were able to think differently, and during those first years I felt isolated, often mute and later followed activities in democratic opposition.

It took years (if ever) to work through the complex feelings and differences within me that live in coexistence - different from integration. With the help of group analysis and psychoanalysis I tried to understand the world I was living in and repair my internal world when attacked from within. At an external, large group, level after the war I observed a temporary celebration of similarities expressing the need to redefine and rebuild group identity. The mourning for a lost country and its lost values revived shadows of my family from the past. I believe that I didn't insulate myself, as a citizen and professional, from really knowing, through a constant search for the truth, as an unending task for the preservation of sane human values (Segal).

Part of those reparative processes continued while I was conducting the training in Group Analysis ten years later in Bosnia, Republica Srpska, facing their pains and experiences while living in a world where differences were not tolerated. I learned through experience that mutual interest stems from common humanity and that within social groups with different interests there is no other way then to negotiate aloud and for the different voices to interrelate. And I didn't lose hope, but I will share this experience on another occasion.

Part two

I would like to change tack and introduce one of my therapy groups in order to look at the complex interplay between a conductor's and the group members' fear in/of group during the course of approaching meaningful communication. Foulkes expressed the idea that open, meaningful communication is a sign of psychic development.

Much of the anxiety about groups may be because it is an unknown experience. An individual's goal is often the relief from suffering. The treatment of the individual is often framed in terms of the problem of the individual, whereas in the treatment in/by a group it must be framed as a problem of the group. Foulkes (1964) saw the neurotic position, by its very nature, as highly individualistic. Therefore in Foulkes's mind the best forum for the process of cure and the enabling of healthy individuality was the group. Yalom (1985) writes that group therapy's goals may seem incongruent initially with the patient's goals. Group goals include the movement of the whole

group and meaningful communication in atmosphere of trust. But often, if not as a rule, these processes are not smooth.

The group I am introducing could be considered as new, because five new members were accepted in a short period of time under certain circumstances. Very soon I realized I felt tense, almost fearful during the meetings. I had an impression that their contacts were building too fast. What was frightening about this?

The life histories of all the members were difficult and full of losses. I fully acknowledged that fact when we sat together in a circle. I was aware from the start that members expressed curiosity and hope that it would be possible to get closer to each other and experience something new.

But the start was poignant. A new member, Ms J, told an old member, Ms A, that she reminded her of her mother. But Ms J previously had described her mother as being intrusive, infantile, talking too much, always being late. Ms A, successful woman, a refugee in past) felt offended and a terrible fight exploded in the group between the two of them. They stopped communicating verbally, while non-verbally ignoring and avoiding looking at each other. They interrupted each other when one of them spoke. For a while nothing could be said to remove the iron curtain between them. It is not necessary to mention that I used all my "weapons" to work through the theme of exclusion relevant for them or other members (repetitive painful exclusion through being a refugee, exclusion from the parental couple eternally quarrelling...).

What was interesting was that Ms A became punctual after a few years of arriving 15 minutes late to every session. Her behaviour infuriated the group but in vain, she seemed unchangeable. I think that in fear of exclusion she wanted to keep her territory (group) occupied. Nonetheless, it was a useful change. At the same time other members were getting closer to each other and they included the two of them...but separately.

After a third session in the group, it happened that Ms J suddenly lost her father, who was very unstable, and whom she had been parenting all her life, but whom she hadn't seen for a whole year. All members expressed an empathic attitude. Ms A was courteous but stayed restrained. Meanwhile a paranoid atmosphere developed in the group because Ms J's father died in a public place and was treated as an N.N. person at first. Ms J suspected that Ms A knew something

about that, considering that Ms A worked at position where she could have such information. Ms J made allusions to her profession as being sadistic. It was obvious to me that Ms J, who previously was in individual therapy with me, projected her hostility into Ms A and that Ms A was refusing new relationship (as in her life). For the time being the group and the therapist couldn't move through this.

One day in the middle of a very vivid discussion Ms F (the youngest, an intelligent, most fragile member who lost her mother at a young age) interrupted somebody to say that she could not withstand any more that everything in the group looked good, but actually something in the air was amiss, showing with her hands an arch between A and J. The atmosphere in the group changed a little. Mr G, a fragile member who entered the group for his somatic complaints, but was talented at describing his feelings accurately, spoke about his shame. Shame was a feeling that from childhood determined his life. He missed a lot because of shame.

At once Mr C, (an inhibited member) who rarely spoke said: I am gay, and Ms J added: Me too. Both were relieved. Other members, one by one, told them authentically how that was OK with them.

Despite the importance of this shared information, I felt there was still tension in the air.

The next meeting started again with the theme of shame. Somebody said that shame is feeling young for your age - as they indicated that we were dealing with childish feelings. Ms A insisted that Mr G should not feel shame. Mr C said he had never told anybody in his entire life about his homosexual orientation, only to you, directing himself to the group members. Ms J was encouraging him that he should be free in front of others, like she was in front of her family and friends.

Again there was high tension within the group. I understood that the group became like a battle-field: Ms J and Mr A tried to conquer two men by getting close to them. Both men offered the group their weak hidden parts to avoid unsolvable hate between two members. Were they trying to help me to hold the group?

Somebody remembered that it was courageous what Mr G had said previously, that he didn't want to have children which was in agreement with his wife's opinion (they lived in merged relationship, she was depressed and he didn't work in order to take care of her). And then one by one, the group members were stating that they didn't

want to have children. Even Ms A, who wanted to conceive a child without having a partner, became uncertain about her decision.

Only Ms V, in a shy manner, said she wouldn't mind giving birth to a child with a man she loved. But her voice was weak, like nobody heard her.

Their voices seemed united and triumphant while they joyfully exchanged the idea of not having children. I noticed the loss of differentiation among group members. There was no real acknowledgement that they had different problems that required different solutions, they listened to each other as if those differences were not real.

There was something in that uniformity that was frightening. However, my fear of them turned into my anger. I fell into my own thoughts, watching them and wondering how I made the mistake to compose such a group, and how ineptly I felt trying to offer help. Then my thoughts flew out of the group and I remembered two pregnant patients who were in individual therapy with me. I was mute in my anger, feeling totally excluded.

However, near the end of that meeting Mr C, who was sitting next to me, said that he had had a dream the night before. It was nightmare.

He was on a road, a very rough one, and to his surprise he found a pram. The pram was old-fashioned, with a huge spherical roof and huge wheels. He approached it in fear and to his astonishment there was no baby in it. There was only a baby toy in an empty pram. The scene was so frightening to him that he awoke.

Then, the mood in the group completely changed, while Mr C was telling the dream. As Foulkes stated, a therapy group has the capacity for multidimensional levels of communication. I was astonished by the intensity of fear I witnessed in them. The group was silent. I remember that at once my anger was gone and I felt real warmth for the group. I realized it was their hostility which group members had projected into and which I was carrying for them. Had that hostility arisen out of their frustration and disappointment that the power they attributed to me had not resulted?

Meanwhile, everybody (including Ms A and Ms J) empathised with Mr C, how terrible and frightening it was that there was no baby in the pram. But this time they were not uniform, but talking from different perspectives, each of them becoming thoughtful about their own limitations and fears of the group.

The members understood with my help that the dream brought by Mr C revealed their deepest fear that the group might disappear. The idea that the group was needed for their psychic survival, not only to fulfil their expectations of comfort, seemed to be obscure. I pointed to their hostility at me for conducting the group in such a way that they experienced a rough time. I believed that they felt like they'd been left on the road with a fear that the group would vanish (like the baby from the pram) and how at one level they didn't care about their shared life in the group (baby) only the individual space they were fighting for (like J and A). And it was fruitful.

It was of primary importance that those fears didn't become reality. If it had not been worked through, the fears of a tendency to exclude could have been modified into a tendency to expel one or more members. In time the contradiction between individual and group attitudes was lessening, as well as the shame of expressing dependent (childish) needs.

Two years after: the group slowly became a safer and more trustworthy place; Ms J and Ms A became very close and supportive of each other; Mr G divorced (his wife initiated the divorce), but it seemed as if he cut off his feelings about this; Mr C was less inhibited and after four years took a few exams and reconquered a relationship with a very dependent partner; Ms V struggled with her resistances to accept the group - she left prematurely; Ms F became more alive, although silently, slowly improving her relationship with her father.

Mr C's dream before the summer pause:

His cousin, who is paralysed for twenty years, sits in her wheelchair. At once, to his surprise, she stands up, takes a few steps and takes a handkerchief from the box, then makes a few more steps and returns to her wheelchair.

The group was puzzled. The thought that the steps they had made (improvement in working through paralyzed feelings) were jeopardized came to my mind.

Epilogue: Forbidden love

After the summer pause Mr G came to me and informed me that he and Ms F were in love and had been in a relationship for six months.

I immediately remembered how Ms F was speechless and difficult to reach for a while. I felt guilt for not noticing what was going on. Instead, I announced new members before the break. I remembered

how fragile both of them were, and of F's tendency toward risky and rebellious behaviour, and of G's tendency to create merged relationships and avoid painful feelings. I felt fear for the group (not anger). The scenario of Sofie's Choice flew through my mind.

I met both of them and encouraged to bring the theme to the group. The information at first was accepted easily ("Good for you two"), without genuine feelings. The members tried to go on. Somebody reminded us that couples were not allowed in the therapy group. Would one or both of them be excluded from the group? Little by little fear came over the group like a gloom. I had no doubt that the whole group's love and hate was imprinted on their secret relationship.

The bomb exploded a few sessions later when Ms F was again enigmatically silent and somebody pointed to the arch between G and F. She was furious and said she knew that there was no room for her any more. The atmosphere became serious and Mr C asked both of them why they had waited six months to talk with the group about their relationship, expecting a sincere answer. It turned out that they feared condemnation of their relationship, that it would be named misty love. The most painful of all was hearing that Mr G at that time didn't care about the feelings of other members, only Ms F's. Only then did others speak about how betrayed and excluded they felt, like fools.

Taking the risk to reveal the secret parts of group life and to work them through, enabled a new quality of closeness between the members, despite uncertainty about the future membership of the group.

The group enabled regression to, but also progression from, dyadic dependency, toward reliving triadic relationships and a recognition of the complementarity of different roles and stages of development as maturation takes place. (Brown, 2006)

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Why should individual members be afraid to be in a group?

By Marie Hošková, IGA Prague

Read to the Summer School by Luděk Vrba

This paper reflects the fears and anxieties of individual members as possible obstacles and defences which are brought to the group matrix.

The group is understood as a common potential space, created by individual fantasies and wishes, a space for growth and integration, and also as a space built in the conductor's mind.

The main theme of the GASI Summer School, “Who’s Afraid of Groups?” paraphrases Edward Albee’s well-known absurdist drama, “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” In the Czech translation, it is sometimes translated as “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf?” From time immemorial, the wolf has been a symbol of an unknown danger for humans, as well as cunning and offensive aggression. In fairy tales and myths, the wolf represents a powerful, consuming entity (object). One of the most primitive paranoid anxieties of group members is the fear that one of the others will eat them, or that everything valuable will be taken from them.

In the context of analytic work, the figure of the wolf represents the unknown, uncontained and therefore rejected part of our mental space, which may contain both passions and memories of parts in the past that remained unintegrated. Can we share these paranoid anxieties with others? Will we be even more flooded with them if we talk about them with others? Together we can consider the threats evoked in a meeting of two or more people – in a small analytic groups as well. We will show how shared group work can assist in naming, common sharing and processing these threats.

Albee’s drama, “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf” takes place during one evening. At a private party, Martha, the daughter of a university rector, and her husband, George, a once-promising historian, invite a young and childless couple, the biologist Nick and his wife Honey. The four characters have mutual dialogues, which during the evening resemble a cruel game, one in which the most private themes are discussed, complexes kept secret are revealed, as well as hatred and anxiety. Through the dialogues, the author has the characters

break down conventions, affectations, scruples and barriers. He points out their unfulfilled desires; the desire for a baby in Nick and Honey's childless marriage, as well as the fiction that the childless George and Martha created - the story of a son killed in a car accident. At the end of the drama, George and Martha kill the illusion they created together of the existence of a child, an illusion they themselves maintained over the years, and which held their marriage together.

What a paradox, when they created the illusion of an object of comfort, which was at the same time an object of loss, a dead one.

Every human encounter activates in its subject the emotional experiences they have gone through thus far with others. These experiences take their course from the earliest phases of development among the subject and the caregiver, and are later firmed up in further encounters in groups, and become a part of the rudimentary mental system.

Each meeting of two or more people is therefore a potential space for testing thus far confirmed patterns how to stand one's ground among others and to maintain a feeling of one's own value, while at the same time offering the possibility of how to fulfill hidden conscious and unconscious expectations which develop in mutual communication and in relationships.

Emotional experience always emerges in relationships. What's needed for their development and experience is acceptance and understanding, as well as that someone - as an object - will remain and help in undertaking new experiences.

Bion (1962) assumed that the basic emotional activities are L (love), H (hatred) and K (knowledge). Their experience is always connected with fear, which blocks emotional activity, but which may be overcome by the feeling of curiosity and a desire for learning the truth. Fear of rejection and misunderstanding interferes with and slows down all communication. The forces which block emotional connection serve destructively; Bion classified them with a minus sign: -L, -H and -K. Bion formulated the moment in human encounters as an emotional turbulence (1976) - a conflict between the various counteracting wishes and emotions which are the source of anxiety, and the fear of misunderstanding, non-acceptance, and rejection. In the concept of emotional turbulence, Bion turns our attention mainly to these relational connections. He discovered that only

through pain, frustration and passage, we have a chance of transformation and of understanding one's self and others.

We know that Bion was long-term devoted to groups, initially as a military psychiatrist in charge of soldiers gathered at the military hospital at Northfield. He noticed natural group processes, mainly how the group itself prevented its own dissolution by creating so-called basic assumption group; in other words, that it accessed the unconsciously shared consensus of primitive fantasies and defenses. The group also did not need orders from "above", but only needed the conditions necessary for self-reflection to become a "work group."

The conductor helps the group to create these conditions; he or she primarily has the function of a dynamic administrator. The conductor ensures that the group meets regularly at a specific place and time, takes responsibility for the selection of individual members of the group, accepts and delivers messages from others and thus co-creates a framework for group encounters.

In this, he symbolically builds a home of sorts, a safe place for the group's happenings, and offers himself, his body and mind, for the group process. For immature group organisms with stable conditions and a framework for therapy, the conductor's mind becomes a container which absorbs the initial anxiety and insecurity of individual members.

Before the individual members sit with their chairs in a circle in the first group encounter, the group already "lives" in the mind of the group conductor. During the initial conversations before joining the group, the group conductor considers the future group in his thoughts and fantasies. Thus a rudimentary matrix of the future group emerges in the mind of the group conductor.

Which topics will be activated when the group first meets?

Will everyone meet in the end?

The term for the initial encounter is set, as well as the place and time. The group conductor's mind becomes a reservoir of memories and events which individual members present in the initial conversations or short-term individual therapy which preceded the possibility of joining the group.

Among the first threads of the group matrix are trust in individual members of the group in the "project" of group therapy offered to them by the conductor, and, at the same time, trust in the conductor

that the members addressed will form a group in the end. Bion even uses the term “faith” as an analyst’s “scientific state of mind,” in which a role is played by the conviction that individual group members will gradually accept his way of perceiving the group, as a subject, where every member of the group takes part in the conscious and unconscious events of the group, and hence his or her place and role is indispensable for the group. At that time a common story begins to unfold “here and now”, in a beginner’s spirit, “without memory and desire”.

In the group’s first encounter, the group conductor must put aside his “reservoir” of information and his personal fantasy of the group matrix.

The group will build its story and history in its own way, and with a completely different tempo than what the conductor imagined.

Clinical example

In the first group encounter, planned for January immediately after Christmas, instead of the planned 8 members of the group - 5 men and 3 women - only half come. We sit in a circle facing each other, silently, looking at each other, with empty chairs between us. Where are the others? Will anyone else come? How big will our group be in the end? Why aren’t the others coming?

The group time is running; it is strictly limited. I hide my anxiety and insecurity, the weight of responsibility and feelings of guilt in my faith in the group process. I tell the group: “Yes, beginnings tend to be difficult. We all now face uncertainty and disappointment that the other four members aren’t here. Our group has just started, even if there are some

“holes” in it, and it will continue always on the same day and at the same time.” After the initial silence and awkwardness, the members of the group begin to take interest in one another - in their names and why they came to the group.

Václav (age 38) speaks. A son was born to him over Christmas. It’s the fourth child in the family, and now it’s even - two daughters and two sons. The members present congratulate him. Václav is a sensitive, responsible man of somewhat fragile constitution. He confides his anxiety and fears to the group, fears that brought him to a psychiatrist and later to the group.

Can he manage to take care of such a large family? This fourth child was not planned. His wife has been under treatment for depression for several years. Shouldn't Václav spend his time with his family instead? He suffers from anxiety and feelings of guilt. He fears that while he's away at the group, a catastrophe will take place at home, and mentions his fear that his wife might attempt suicide. He himself comes from a large family.

He has four older siblings. He felt like the last in line, the one who could not interest his father with anything he did. He always depended instead on his older brother. He's employed in his brother's company; his brother is his boss.

The members of the group carefully listen to Václav and encourage him to remain in the group. Václav accepts the encouragement with relief, albeit hesitatingly.

After a short silence, someone asks **Julie** (age 28) why she joined the group. She looks so young, playful and worry-free! Julie is finishing her second university degree, and has been truly living a student lifestyle for almost 10 years, far from the town where her mother and younger brother live. Her father died tragically when Julie was 19, shortly before she started university. She has a feeling that she doesn't miss her father at all. She's happy that she now lives freely. In the past, her mother frequently placed demands on her to take care of her younger brother and study with him, because he always had problems in school. Julie claims that she is satisfied now. She is in a long-term relationship with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend is placing demands on Julie to get married, which Julie refuses.

Jirka (age 35) needs to emphasize that he went for an entire year to individual therapy and was treated with antidepressants. He sits next to me, the group's conductor, as if he wants to give the others the impression that he is closer to me than the others. He is still occupied

with the question of why his girlfriend, with whom he had a long-term relationship, in the end broke up with him. He ponders what could have bothered her about him, and is angry about finding out not long ago that she is already married. Jirka feels unsuccessful. Although he has a university education, he cannot find suitable employment in his field and has to be satisfied with a short-term contract in state administration as a "substitute." He lives in an apartment with his father, who is being treated for a manic-depressive disorder.

Jirka must “keep an eye on” his father, making sure he takes his medicine and does not waste all the money he’s saved.

He feels as though time has stopped since his mother died when he was five years old. In the apartment, everything is still in its place. But she is not. Jirka would like to become independent, to move away from his father, and would like to find a new girlfriend.

David (age 30) listens with a grim expression. From time to time, he utters an ironic remark, and claims that he is very distrustful. Instead of introducing himself to the group, he introduces his dogs - they’re strays sent to the shelter. With this, he shows the group what kind of care and understanding he himself probably needs. With humour, he tells about the bigger male dog’s misbehaving, while he has to take the smaller female into his arms to make sure the naughty dog doesn’t hurt her. For David, animals are part of the family. Even if, in a small apartment, their presence is often uncomfortable, David wouldn’t trade them “for anything in the world.” He lives together with his girlfriend, whose dog has made friends with his dogs.

It would appear that splitting is appearing in the group from the beginning. The four present members have become spokespersons for the other, non-present members. The four present members have created the true atmosphere of a “work group.” The four non-present members represent the anonymous, non-present, secondary, thus-unknown part of the group.

Bion formulated the goal of the group analysis in his work, *Learning from Experience*, as the possibility of allowing one to carry and to process the fragmented psychotic anxiety of group members, which are activated in the transference. For this, a sufficiently good container is necessary in the mind of the group conductor, which in time may be shared with the group.

Is it possible after the first group encounter to intuitively consider the group matrix as the basic fabric for the group, into which additional threads will be placed, and that the basic relationship matrix becomes “thicker?”

The group and transpersonal processes pass through individuals. Through them, the common group mind is gradually revealed. At the same time, every individual member of the group is re-shaping the group mind according to their experiences and adjustment, and this experience is brought back to the group. The group conductor names

the phenomena shared by the group. In doing so, he makes their connection possible in the minds of the individual group members.

At the end of the introductory encounter, when I told the group that it seems that the theme of fatherhood has arisen here, and that it may not be coincidence, considering the fact that I am conducting the group, as if I intuitively brought up questions that may have been part of the initial group anxiety. Where is the father? Is the father important in the family?

Can we speak about our worries only with the mother? Won't we have to protect her too much, or help her?

At the second group encounter, everyone gradually came. Before the others were able to notice **Iva** (age 25) they noticed the telling slogan on her t-shirt: "I hate communism." The sentence began with small letters, and got bigger on each row. What did she want to indicate to the group? Iva is completing her studies at university, but had to interrupt them. She has been seeing a psychiatrist for a year with a suspected psychotic disorder. She collapsed after a breakup with her boyfriend. She was under the impression that she could not trust anyone or anything. Her father was a strict soldier, a high officer, who imposed military order at home as well. The family moved frequently due to his career, so Iva barely became used to new classmates before she had to say goodbye to them.

Everyone in the family had to listen to the father; discussion was not allowed. During adolescence, Iva rebelled, left home for another far away city, and tried to find different ideologies and friendships that she could rely upon. She initially grasped at the ideals of Christianity, and was baptized. Not long thereafter, she became disappointed in some of the

church's conventions, and her friends - who brought her to Christianity - disappointed her. Later Iva was enthusiastic about the ideals of scouting, but in time the same thing happened. She felt that the ideal was beautiful, but that people did not adhere to it. She stopped believing in the possibility of change; she started to be impatient. This was expressed in her accelerated speech and inability to conceptualize. She was even hospitalized with suspected psychosis.

Petr (age 33) appears to be a calm, mature and serene man. In the group, he tends to listen to others. He came to the group because at the moment he's looking for his purpose. He wants to be useful. He had long-term depression, and didn't know what to do with himself;

he often spent evenings in the pub and used alcohol excessively. After his divorce, he went to individual psychoanalysis for three years. It was hard to come to terms with the fact that his wife had left him. They have a 12-year-old daughter, who Petr takes care of in joint custody, and they have a good relationship together. Now he is deciding whether he should join the Czech army as a volunteer and go to Afghanistan. This decision is based on his inclination toward theology, which Petr studied for his second university degree. His original profession is as a successful programmer.

He hopes the group will help to “open his eyes” and to learn how to live further. He has certain doubts, though. He doesn’t believe in some theological disciplines; people who live something different than what they proclaim have disappointed him. In the beginning it appears that Petr doesn’t trust the group very much either. Often, nearly every other group

meeting, he is absent. It is as if he needed greater distance, so that he could only observe events in the group and could withdraw at any time.

From the beginning, **Tomáš** (age 29) has shown himself to be the great debater in the group. It would appear that Petr’s story and interest in philosophy and theology have impressed him. He has a tendency to develop discussions in the group on philosophical and religious topics, asks provocative questions, seeks unambiguous answers, quotes from philosophical literature and greatly usurps the space in the group. Petr opposes him in the group frequently, or grinds down the unambiguity with which Tomáš seeks answers to what is good and bad.

He confides to the group that he greatly misses his father in his life. When his parents divorced, he had just turned four. Tomáš strongly condemns his father for leaving. He himself has stood in his place and became his mother’s advisor. He could not allow himself any weakness or helplessness; he wanted to protect his mother and tried not to add to her

worries. In the group, he wants to discuss his own marriage, which is falling apart. He has only been married a year, and already feels like he wants to leave his wife. They have no children; Tomáš does not want to be tied down, and at the same time does not want to hurt his wife.

Hanka (age 30) has presented herself as the immature “baby” of the group. She came to the group because of her social phobia - she

does not trust herself, is timid, constantly needs someone's advice and encouragement. She only seeks temporary work, despite having a university education. She is completely in the hands of her father, who controls her life. Her father recommends where Hanka should go to work and supports her financially; Hanka does not dare rebel against her father. She does not speak about her mother in the group.

In the beginning, she raises interest and anxiety in the other members of the group, which provokes them to make various recommendations, giving advice and frequent encouragement to separate from her father and become independent.

In the group's initial meetings, we meet with the symptoms of individual members, which are gradually placed into a common group matrix. The group conductor connects and names individual isolated symptoms, thoughts and feelings of the group's members, which generally relate to the representation of the father. For many members of the group, the father was unavailable, failing, leaving the mother and family, sick, weak and unreliable.

On the other hand, Hanka and Petr, and sometimes Václav, present their feelings and memories of their fathers as a powerful authority whom they will never equal. This is connected with feelings of guilt and helplessness.

In this atmosphere, the group conductor is protected from feelings of anger and from the group members' anxieties, and also from questions relating to the parents. Who caused the parents' breakups, and in which circumstances?

Is it the group conductor-mother, who permitted these topic to be the topic in the group? Psychoanalytic knowledge informs us that the child does not perceive the father directly, but rather through the mother. Through the mother's conscious and unconscious fantasy, experience with her own father and the resulting expectations related to the paternal role, they co-create and build the paternal representation in the child's mind.

In the transference, the group perceives the conductor as a lonely, abandoned mother, who must remain resistant enough to hold on and contain the anxiety and needs of individual group members, and the group as a whole.

As the conductor of the group, I therefore deal with the level of influence of my own countertransference reactions to the basic

question in the group matrix, which sounds something like: Where is the father? Why is he not here with us? Aren't we the ones to blame that the father is missing? Do you miss him here too?

The father in psychoanalysis

In psychoanalytic literature, the father tends to be most frequently connected with his sexualized role in the oedipal drama. Further aspects of the paternal role and its formative influence on the internal world have concentrated on his protective and supportive functions. According to D. Winnicott (1991), the father is, above all, the protector of the mother's relationship to her children, and protects this relationship from outside influences so that the mother can devote herself to consolidating her maternal role as best she can.

The father also represents an alternative binding figure and a bridge to the outside world. According to other authors (Etchegoyen, 2002), the father protects the children from fears connected to the mother, and limits the influence of the mother's phobias and fears upon the child (Guedeney, Kreisler, 1996).

Freud describes the Oedipal father as a kind of representative of external reality, who protects the child from satisfying its libidinal wishes towards the mother. According to Freud, prohibitions and feelings of rivalry with the father become the core of the superego. The threat of castration and fear of the father emphasized its power and phallic aspect.

The relationship to the Oedipal father occupied a central place in the majority of his philosophical and anthropological essays. The term 'forefather' (the primary archaic father in Totem and Taboo (1913)) describes the violence and inconsistency between the father and the son, and the guilt that follows from this relationship. Freud worked with the hypothesis of the primeval horde and patricide to explain the origin of exogamy and the taboo of incest. The totemic system was a kind of contract with the archaic father, who promised his sons protection and care, and the sons pledged respect to him and his life by banning patricide.

While Freud's Oedipus wishes for the father's death to remove him as an obstacle preventing the satisfaction of erotic desires for the mother, for W. Bion, Oedipus becomes a lonely seeker of truth, an arrogant searcher, an "intellectual Oedipus" (Bleandon, 1994).

Bion emphasizes the importance of the mythical Sphinx (1961), who represents human curiosity. It enables him to understand the relationship to the parental pair and to adapt to reality. Bion also pointed out the importance of psychotic annihilation anxiety, which is activated in unknown environments. A group of heretofore unknown people is one such environment, a group which is first discovering its possibilities, rules and the framework with which it can reflect itself. Then the fear of its dissolution occurs, a fear of abandonment and a loss of safety, which the group co-creates in cohesion with its conductor.

Bion discusses three states of mind, which are thusly activated in the group. Groups which function in the mode of some of these basic assumptions - dependency, fight-flight, pairing - may lead to destruction and attacks on the interior representation of the parental couple, and to the fragmentation of its functioning.

In the basic assumption of the dependency group, every individual member of the group relates to the conductor as Oedipus did to his mother, wanting to capture her interest and attention for himself. In a group where the basic assumption of fight-flight figures, the need occurs to find a common enemy, to flee from exploring the truth by thinking that the enemy - possibly an enemy state of mind - is placed outside the group as a kind of common shared danger.

Psychotic anxiety in Basic Assumption Groups can lead to destruction and attacks on the interior representation of the parental couple and its fragmentation. The parental couple exists in the mind of the child in the form of preconception, and in first contact with the real parents gains a concrete character in psychic (psychological) reality. Bion assumed that individual fragments of the oedipal myth are more important for the structure of our thought than the story itself. In the basic assumption of the dependency group, every individual member of the group relates to the conductor as Oedipus did to his mother, wanting to capture the conductor's interest and attention for himself. In the second basic assumption of a fight-flight group, the flight is from the oracle and learning the truth, and the fight removes obstacles between individuals in the group by "killing the enemy", that is the hostile or divergent state of mind represented by King Laius. In the third basic assumption of the pairing group, what emerges, is an effort to conceive a viable child - a new idea or topic.

The group conductor, who is identified with the working atmosphere in the workgroup, helps the group with questions and topics - such as

the fear of incest, murder and guilt - that may be awakened. By placing them into the context of the group matrix and connecting them to already worked through topics, he or she moderates their intensity and makes their integration possible.

Frequently as conductor, I have posed the question of who I have for support and what is my basis for my understanding of the group. Theory? Faith in the group process? Maintaining a stable and safe framework in the course of dynamic administration? Later, perhaps in the second year of the group's life, it occurred to me how powerful an effect is the environment of the room where the group encounters take place. A large poster depicting S. Freud smoking a cigar with the caption 'Life is a dream' hung on the wall behind the chair I always sat in. That this artefact could serve the group matrix as an intermediary for creating a fantasy paternal image occurred to me when someone from the group would sometimes start to mention Freud and joke about him.

Psychoanalytic theory says that despite the physical and emotional absence of the real father, there always exists some sort of internal image or representation. Children fill the void presented by the absent father with an omnipotent image of the ideal and all-punishing father. This need does not relate only to the fulfilment of psychological emptiness, but also

to the finding of the father as a real, important figure. (In the sense of Herzog's description of the 'hunger for the father', Fonagy, Target, 2002). The quality of the relationship between the parents is important for the creation of a mental representation of the father. Joyce McDougall (in Target, Fonagy, 2002) writes that the father who is dead can exist in the mind of the child as a very living figure depending on the way how he is mediated by the mother. On the other hand, the present father can be symbolically lost, absent or dead in the internal world if his presence is denied or "killed" by the mother. The group situation therefore offers a space for filling the void and for creating a **new image of repaired paternal representation**.

In the atmosphere of the work group there was mostly a "cooperative atmosphere." Nevertheless, splitting in the initial phase of the dependency group led to "scapegoating" in the end.

Hanka, the "baby" of the group, who constantly required the attention and advice of other members but was herself unable to be interested in their problems, left the group after a year. She preferred individual therapy. There, she claimed, she would have space only

for herself. In the beginning, the group kept her from leaving, but in the end agreed with her departure.

In the group, **Václav** worked through his position in his marriage. It turned out that his wife was far less fragile and powerless, and not as ill as Václav perceived and portrayed her to the group. On the contrary, Václav let himself be manipulated into the role of the one who had to take care of the family and who had to downplay his own needs and demands. Václav also devoted a large amount of time to his position as an employee of his brother's advertising agency. He always admired and listened to his older brother.

In the end, Václav decided to extricate himself from this dependence on his brother and employer, and founded his own company devoted to furniture design, which is the field Václav studied. He lost security and a steady income, but he is no longer the family's only provider. His wife found work, and together they have a dog kennel for rare breeds. Václav and David's stories of dogs countlessly invigorated the atmosphere in the group and became a transitional topic for describing complicated family relationships. Václav also found new friends and became more self-confident.

Julie gradually withdrew from her position of a playful and care-free student. She became more serious and expanded on the difficult situation in her family after her father's death. Julie felt a great responsibility for the welfare of her younger brother; after her father's death, she 'took charge' of him. She welcomed the possibility to leave for Prague to study at university and to be farther from home, but she succumbed to a boyfriend several years older - her first - whom she met when she wasn't even 15.

Now she feels tied down and unfree, and discusses with the group how to get out of the relationship. In the end, she was successful. After finishing her studies, she found work and a place to live of her own. She fell in love with a colleague, and at the end of the group she gave birth to a healthy son.

Considering the high risk of genetic burden on her father's side, this was great luck.

With the help of the group, **Petr** worked through the dissolution of his marriage and the need to anchor himself again in a relationship. He gradually let go of his intention to leave for Afghanistan. In the group, he also lived through the sudden death of his father, whom he always experienced as a great authority. The death of Petr's father became a group topic of working through a "death" of the group. At

the time we discussed the planned end of the group in a year. Petr met a new partner, a doctor, and mother of a young daughter. Her husband died after a tragic accident. Petr became the child's adoptive father, and married the doctor at the end of the group.

Jirka, with the help of the group, wrestled with his dependence on his sick father, and in the end managed to find an apartment and move away from his father. He also accepted the possibility of going abroad for work, and travelled by train to attend the group. Jirka therefore became the “spokesman” for the group for the separation process and for courageous decisions.

Only when **David** felt safe in the group did he confide his depression, dependence on the internet and his feelings of anger toward his father. He cannot forgive him for leaving his mother. David felt responsible for her. The separation processes in the group supported David in his decision to get married. He shared the preparations for the wedding with the group and had enough confidence to remodel his apartment. Towards the end of the group, his daughter was born, who he named Julie.

Iva was rather a silent but carefully listening member of the group. She usually spoke when asked to, and pregnant expressed the essence of things. She was always present in the group, arrived on time, and was among the first. She was the group's “guiding star.” But it was apparent that, inside her, the process of transformation was taking place, which was documented by her rapid completion of university studies and the fact that Iva began to sing again after years. She found a new circle of friends, where she met her husband.

At the end of the group, she was pregnant.

Tomáš, the great debater and fighter, found peace with the support of the group, to settle down and calmly think about his own thoughts and decisions. During the group, he divorced and thought greatly about his father, whom he criticized and did not have contact with him his entire life. He met with his father for the first time in years, and talked with him.

At the end of the group he found a new girlfriend, and recently a daughter was born, who he named Julie.

Petra (age 25) came to the group about a year before its planned end

In the place freed up after Hanka's departure. For several weeks we worked with the fantasies and wishes of the group, about who the members of the group wanted to have instead of Hanka. And with her story, Petra strengthened the separation steps for other members of

the group. Shortly before graduating from university, she preferred to leave

home, where her mother and grandmother held her down and prevented her separation and independence. Petra gave preference to her developing relationship with her boyfriend. Both found work in Prague as teachers, and they found a modest apartment.

Instead of Hanka's dependency and anxiety, Petra came to the group with the courage to separate, and to take responsibility for the consequences of adult decisions. It appears that individual members' efforts at separation and courageous steps became a powerful impetus for change. The group became a space where traumatic and injurious experiences could be repaired, where the paternal representation entered the picture through the projective process. The group, as the mother, represented by the conductor, symbolized the containing, listening, and non-judgmental function of the "good enough mother" (Winnicott's term), who, however, needs and accepts a "good enough father," whom she can lean on.

Thus, the shared space of the group does not take away anything from any member. Just the opposite: it adds and enriches.

In Caroline Garland's article (2011 in *Bion Today*), this potential of the group is documented by the story from the New Testament which tells of the feeding of the five thousand. It was enough that two men from the crowd accepted the call - one offered five fish, the second seven loaves of bread, and despite everyone having their fill, there were still many baskets left over.

The figure of Jesus symbolizes the good breast, the belief looking upon and connecting with good objects in heaven, it feed the crowd. Jesus did not do this alone, he sent his disciples. It turned out that every person in the crowd had something to eat that they did not want to lose in the beginning. By sharing together, however, they showed that there was not a lack, but rather an abundance of everything...

25th June 2015

Editor's note: No bibliography had been compiled by the author before her death.

I'm Afraid of the Big Bad Group

By Helena Klímová

This paper is dedicated to Marie Hošková, who came up with the title “Who is Afraid of Groups?” It was Marie who later succeeded in assembling the Czech working team and in-so-doing answered her own question: she created a good small group. She was our honest and beloved inspiration.

As a group analyst, I feel extremely concerned about the two major group events of my life – the two totalitarian regimes. I was eight years old when WWII and Nazi rule came to an end and I was fifty-two when the Communist regime was gone after its forty-year reign. Those two big groups were the big bad groups of my life.

So – can a stronger motivation exist to study the dynamics of human grouping?

Both totalitarian regimes, however, started as though chosen voluntarily: the Nazi Movement in Germany of the thirties, and the Communist regime in post-war Czechoslovakia. Thus we can conclude that there might have been something wrong with those large group matrices and that it would be useful to detect this fault for the sake of future prevention.

Let me state my hypothesis: the misleading driving force of those bad groups was the dynamic part of the social unconscious – the false collective self, or, more concisely – the false we. Such a statement, of course, raises the basic question: **Is there such a thing at all? Collective subjectivity?**

As Winnicott would have put it: the individual becomes a person by creating a group and by being created by it. The group is as characteristic of the human species as walking upright, as the use of language, as bare skin.

Then, according to Pines:

“...if there is an essential element of ‘group’ in the constitution of the individual, as indeed group analysis affirms, then it becomes more possible to consider that there is a value in regarding ‘the group as a Self’” (Pines, 1996,183).

The concept of the group self is specified by the idea of the “**collective project**”:

“whatever the reasons are for people being together, they will necessarily construct meanings and purposes for their togetherness...Groups do not contain any supraindividual group mind, but a supraindividual project. The project consists of certain ambitions, ideals and resources embedded in a specific history (similar to the individual self), and the project can be carried out on all levels of sophistication...” (Karterud and Stone, 2003, 7).

Under certain circumstances a group (any group) may develop as well a rather destructive, or self-destructive, collective project.

The group self may be used for alien purposes

Let me first bring two vignettes to help clarify:

Vignette 1: *It was in the early fifties, during the time of the freshly introduced totalitarian communism in Czechoslovakia. The group was a school class of twelve-year-olds. One day a strange man entered the classroom, presented himself as the new school principal, and announced that all pupils should become members of the Communist Pioneer movement. All of them were ordered to take a solemn oath and to accept the red scarf as a symbol of loyalty.*

Later the children noticed that the new principal was mistakenly confusing various historical personalities and that he was using a vulgar sexual language. He also ordered the children to wear the Pioneers' red scarf obligatorily and chose Maruška, a popular pretty girl, to report to him daily those who would not. The children felt degraded and disoriented. Then Petr, one of the group's natural leaders, suggested a solution: to wear the red scarf – but to hide it under a high turtle-neck. Immediately the whole class gladly accepted his idea and started to wear this severe winter fashion. Thus they felt themselves saved from humiliation, from the power of an evil primitive person, and Maruška was saved from being an informer.

Actually, the children had to discover on their own and from the grass roots the basis of group behaviour under totalitarianism: how to save the group values and subculture and still avoid persecution. The price was freedom of expression; the genuine values of the group were shared only secretly.

The prospect of freedom was changing as history proceeded. Ten years later, in the sixties, the society reached one of its peaks of maturation, intellectually, morally, emotionally. In what was called the Prague Spring movement, various social groups, actually the whole nation, united in an attempt to reform society, to make it freer and more truthful. This intention of the masses was marred by the 1968 invasion of the united armies led by the Soviet Union.

As a result, during the seventies the time of oppression returned when individuals and groups were forced to submit to the re-introduced totalitarianism. During the purges, a whole generation of intellectuals were deprived of their posts and had to serve as unqualified workers. Some were imprisoned. Then every group had to solve the question of how to protect the group values and the integrity of the group in the face of totalitarian power.

***Vignette 2:** It was the middle of the seventies and the group was a team of researchers in the natural sciences. Compared with the humanities, the natural sciences seemed a bit distanced from politics and thus safer. However, even this team had to pay attention to the requested political qualification, which was what was called the cadre profile of the workplace (kádrový profil pracoviště): every scientific team was supposed to consist of the requested number of Party members and was allowed (if at all) only a small number of non-members.*

The head of this team for years had been a scientist who was internationally highly respected, but recently excluded from the Party. Thus not only his leading position but the very existence of his team was threatened. The team members were trying to find a way to stay together with their natural teacher and to prevent infiltration or even annihilation. They decided among themselves to offer some team member as a new Party member to satisfy the political requirement. However, it was difficult to find a person who would be ready to make this self-degrading sacrifice. Finally the lamb was chosen: a young assistant very much devoted to his teacher. In order to protect his beloved master he agreed to apply for Party membership. He was gladly accepted by the Party officials in the position of a candidate and the whole team seemed saved from persecution. But unexpected

dangers appeared. The young man started to be offered, regardless of his real scientific achievements as a beginner, various privileges; the most valued was the possibility to travel abroad and attend scientific conferences and congresses - this was not allowed the others, who then had to suppress their envy. On the other hand, the young man started to be interrogated and lured for collaboration by the secret police. Thus the team integrity was shattered - as well as the personal integrity of the young man.

The two vignettes are separated by twenty years but both reveal the same totalitarian mechanism: the group, in order to survive, is ready to retreat into a state of pretence. In the hope of saving the group and its internal integrity, the group members agree to pretend submission or even agreement with the leading and threatening power. The price is the split between the group's outer behaviour and the true feelings of the group members...or even the decay of the team integrity. The price is the appearance of the false collective self.

Now, again a bit of theory. First, let me return to the theory of the individual.

The individual self may be true or false

According to Winnicott (1960) the individual self of an infant may develop in two ways: the true self may emerge when the natural basic needs of the child are recognized instinctively by the “good-enough mother”. In the opposite case, when the caretaker is a “not good-enough mother”, then the false self is likely to develop.

In the case of the false-self formation the child has to split off some of his/her needs, to accept the mother's needs in their place, and to identify with them, to feel them and to proclaim them as his/her own. The true self of the child thus stays underdeveloped, unrecognized, unnamed. Thus, the false self is created in the process of identification with aggressor – as a mother can behave as an aggressor, too.

The individual's false self, starts as identification with the aggressor

“...faced with an external threat ...the subject identifies himself with his aggressor. He may do so either by appropriating the aggression itself, or else by physical or moral emulation of the aggressor; or again by adopting particular symbols of power by which the aggressor is designated...” (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973, p.208).

The phenomenon of identification with the aggressor was mentioned by Ferenczi as a result of a sexual attack made by an adult upon a child. The resulting behaviour is then total submission to the will of the aggressor (ibid). As the individual grows and matures, then, during separation and individuation, the individual usually reaches a critical distance from the aggressor and becomes able to see the aggressor critically. What may be left is a damaged attitude to oneself, namely, damaged self-esteem and love towards oneself.

Faced with an external threat the group may behave in a similar way to the individual subject: **the group may identify with the aggressor and develop a collective false self, a false we.**

In the two vignettes mentioned we saw a desperate effort by group members to save both the group's physical integrity and its inner truthfulness. It was a time, under the totalitarian regime, when good solutions seemed unavailable; what was available were only bad or still worse solutions. Lack of truth was the price of survival – of individuals and of groups – and the choice often was made consciously and in a state of black despair. Once the totalitarian regime was established, it seemed not to be overcome.

Then the natural question arises, how could such a disastrous regime have begun? How could mature citizens have allowed themselves to submit?

The two main totalitarian systems of 20th century Europe started through the citizens' free choice. In post-war Czechoslovakia the Communist Party won the 1948 elections legally. The social protagonists of the new regime were what was called the generation of the blue blouses. They grew up during the war and reached young adulthood at its end.

"Within traumatized societies, people tend to repeat traumatic experience within their families, schools, military, political and religious institutions and organizations, and within their groups generally...Immigrants, refugees, and survivors of social trauma are especially likely to recreate their previous traumatic experiences in their new societies" (Hopper, 2003b, p.63).

After WWII the whole nation was 'traumatized', but the youngsters of the "blue blouses generation" had experienced the Nazi way of governing as the first and only one in their sensitive youth. No wonder that for many of them identification with the aggressor had become a general pattern. With all their conscious effort, the "blue

blouses” were “fighting and working for a New Better World”. Unconsciously, however, many were using those violent patterns that had been imprinted on their minds by the previous aggressor. They actually sentenced people into readymade,

innate categories just like the Nazis did, although this time it was not according to race, but according to class origin. Group hatred was again used as a legitimate and even legalized form of enforced social development and social control.

Thus, as soon as one totalitarian – Nazi – system was over, the totalitarian Communist system began to grow, in spite of the conscious intentions of many. Those were the imprinted structures and the social behaviour easily associated with new content, new ideology, new words.

An example is given now, as the last vignette.

***Vignette 3:** It was shortly after WWII. The group consisted of young students and workers who had sacrificed their holidays for “brigade-work”: temporary voluntary work for some big industrial or agricultural project. In their childhood, a powerful pattern of war violence had been imprinted into their minds as a model of social behaviour. Being caught in this pattern, they were full of rage against any possible enemy that may appear and were ready to beat him. They were filled with deep solidarity with all those suppressed, exploited, victimized in the world, they were longing for unity and sameness and felt proud to be part of “the masses”. They were desperately longing to build the so-called New World. The group was lacking some necessary group properties like secure boundaries and distribution of group roles: the group members saw themselves just as an undifferentiated part of the masses and group leadership was delegated to the distant Party officials. Any attempt at group individuation would be seen as antagonistic, alien to the masses, to the Party. The group members were merging in a deep and pleasant general regression.*

There is no individual group story – just this description above. There were many groups similar to this one. Even if they gathered for work, they were not working groups by nature, they were much more residing in a state of ritual and the non-verbal activities. Singing and dancing in circles especially replaced words and rational

dialogue. This was the way the totalitarianism was introduced, through this way of grouping which worked as a way of imprinting. At the beginning, it was experienced as the best outcome of the recent dangers of war, as the most secure path, and as the most pleasant regression.

The false collective self thus began as an unconscious collective self-mystification

The choice of the political and social regime, which should be carried out in its full rational capacity, actually took place in a state of half-conscious regression. The possibility of merging with an omnipotent god-like object (which here was the ideology represented by the Party) resembled the primary merging of an infant with its mother, before the infant has reached the state of individuation-separation. This can be seen here in the last vignette.

But vignettes one and two were showing a more historically advanced state – the split between what is experienced by group members as the group's genuine interest and what is spoken and shown when faced with authority. Then the group maturation into self-awareness accompanied by a split with the authority resembles the child's maturation.

The analogy also involves the two developmental stages of the two false selves: both false identities (the false self and the false collective self) develop in at least two stages; the first is marked by total unconscious merging with the aggressive object and the second shows signs of the conscious discoveries of splitting from the aggressive object.

But there is a difference between the individual and the collective false subjectivity. The difference starts just at the beginning: unlike the infant, the group members as adult individuals may display the ability to avoid regression while facing the false authority; they may stay independent and they may help other group members to avoid merging with the totalitarian seduction. This is not easy, totalitarian methods change their external appearance with every new historical era.

The best way to prevent any new totalitarianism from emerging seems to be the strong individual conscience of individual group members: mainly the group members' willingness and ability to create a true collective self. It is a truth that can heal both the individual and the group.

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Reports on the 2015 Summer School in Prague

Summer school – GASi – Prague

By Di King

I could say it was a wonderful experience. It was a mixture of large and small, discussion and supervision groups. I could say I met interesting people that I hope to see again. I could say on the other hand that it was a discreet experience, unique with no certainty of future. I am left with impressions, glimpses, memories, connections.

The rose with the biggest thorns

I think first of the university building. The welcome smiles. After the first day the comfort of the small group. Meeting my repeating patterns, questioning of authority, tolerance.

I can hardly bare a lecture that lasts more than thirty minutes, am easily bored, dislike speakers who cannot let go of the captive audience, but after the first paper from Tija, 'Are group analysts afraid of groups', I am riveted. Not once do I look at my watch. I want it to go on longer. Here is real meat.

The first large group. What will happen here? Noticing where people sit. I take my usual back seat. Difficulty in being heard. People have to risk asking others to speak up – or the tentative voice to be stronger. Seemingly inconsequential remarks - disjointed. The beginning of irritation that some voices are more evident. Others speak collectively - don't speak for me. Anecdotes start - too much effort needed to work out the point. My initial impressions changing. That person speaks with real sincerity – I hadn't seen that before. That one is obscure – I can't be bothered. Should I question or challenge. It is the first day. We are making connections.

The second day

Pleased to be in my familiar small group. I want to address the guilt I was left with from yesterday about being a bit snippy with someone who was saying something important. Had I misunderstood the purpose of the small group? It clearly is and can be a therapy group.

Next paper: Anticipate it with confidence now. I am not disappointed. Marie's heartfelt paper delivered by Ludec. I am becoming

aware of what is behind the conference. I had known about Marie's sudden death but not the significance. The talk and the poignancy of the introductions begin to permeate me. This is other people's grief and shock at the loss of somebody who was hugely loved and respected. I also learn something, when faced with death particularly one so full of feeling, a bit of me doesn't want to engage. I want to go out and play and forget.

The third day

Small group hotting up. Only two Brits, but we dominate. I begin to feel for the struggle these impressive people are having with the language. Also feel manipulation from some to avoid real feeling in the group. I have a wish to hear from the more silent members. Almost all my initial perceptions of the group are changing. A garden of beautiful flowers – my small group. They tell me off - my small group - for saying this.

I have forgotten where my discussion group is. Corridors are empty. Nobody to ask. I go into one that I thought I was in yesterday, but it isn't. I am welcomed and since the discussion is the paper we have just listened to, it doesn't seem to matter.

Facial expressions

When more than now, is this a communication? People struggle to find the right word. I deliberately don't supply what it might be. Same-language delegates confer with each other. In a way, it doesn't matter. Sometimes I close my eyes- listen to the music. Sometimes I can get it by the face, the tone. A smile speaks volumes.

Even though the language is English, at the end of the day, I too am longing for the subtlety of my own language, the humour, the irony. Already I am realising that my humour is not easily translated and that a grim face, struggling to work out what I mean, may not be hostile. At the end of the day, it is a delight to mix with my own and chat, enjoy wonderful Czech beer. How much more this must be for other cultures. Are we ghettoising?

Themes

Irony – national humour, grandmothers, sex, longing, warmth, connection, context, place, sadness and mourning, shock, gender, beer, discord, language.

Again and again talk of sex. In the small and large group. What from the small group can be said in the large group? Use of 'we' in large group irritating. Mention it and aware of my ability to hurt and be hurt by honest feeling. Belief – prejudice – hope – What is yours may not be mine. Is this the stuff of large groups? Is this what people fear? Dreams are brought. Some long and detailed. All have meaning. Marie's death prevails. Such sadness. Moving memories. Tears. I begin to feel I know her. Those close to her struggling with their sadness still managing to stay in role. Sometimes it feels as if the conference will implode in a well of sadness.

The large group becomes bolder. Talk of the eroticism around. Struggles between the wish to explore deeper feeling and sensitivity and politeness. Aware of some angry undercurrent. Maybe it has meaning. I may not be alone. Time too short not to explore. I long for people to be inappropriate.

Each day get richer. People unfold. More and more layers – growing, growing. More incredible papers. Helena's touched me especially today. A conversation at coffee break or over lunch brings understanding, tentative closeness. Names don't need to be known. I recognise you because of what you said yesterday or the interesting exchange we had in the group. Actual facts about a family or profession can still surprise.

The last day arrives too soon. Especially felt in the small group. We have risked a little, we have sparred, we have misunderstood and rectified. Now we must leave.

The last big group. Themes are picked up. It feels to me as if there is a wish to have a final stab at something difficult or unsaid so far. Sex, unresolved floats around. Irritation from some at this pre-occupation. Back to sadness. Immediate grief has been addressed – now the mourning must start. Facilitator's facial expression picked up. Sincere appreciation and gratitude expressed from all. The intelligence and gift of the talks to be treasured. Group warmth. A wonderful experience. An enormous feed. Roses are brought for the staff. Each chooses by colour. The final one, chosen for having the biggest thorns.

Di King

16.08.15

NO MORE AFRAID OF THE GROUP

(a few personal notes on our summer school experience – Prague 2015)

By Helena Klímová

It was early in 2014 when the three messengers came to Prague to invite us to cooperate. Tija, Regine and David arrived to discuss with IGA Prague our future cooperation on the group-analytic summer school to be organized in Prague. I was more than happy, I was hoping for the new start of group-analytic life in Prague. However, the re-start did not seem easy and Marie Hošková, Luděk Vrba and myself then turned for cooperation to CSPAP (Czech Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy) where all three of us are members, too. We were very nicely welcomed by the CSPAP president Eduard Rys and the group-section representative Dana Holubová. Thus the preparations for the GASI Summer School 2015 in Prague could continue, between these international and Czech partners. And we would meet by Skype.

At this point it should be emphasized how much we appreciated the continuing trust on the part of GASI. Tija, Regine and David stayed with us and went on trusting our capacity to succeed in our common task.

On Regine's suggestion, Marie undertook the task of chairperson and succeeded to create a very nice and diligent Czech team – just like as if she answered, in a very positive way, her own question which she engraved into the summer school title: who is afraid of the group?...So we were not afraid of our group, we started to be fond of our team. We used to meet and work and we had a very nice time together: Marie, Luděk, Eduard, Dana, Mabel Rodriguez, Denisa Schucková, Mirka Chmeličková, Hana Drábková, Daniela Seifertová and Alice Veselá, who fitted into our circle very well as a professional organizer. We all were looking towards realizing our common goal: to show that we in Prague indeed are able to create a scientific meeting and to host our international guests.

What stays is my deep sorrow and uncertainty: probably we let Marie overload herself with work and responsibility. But also, nobody of us knew that her health had been threatened already years before. At the end of spring she became ill...On June 25th she completed and sent us her GASI Summer School lecture for translation...On July 5th she passed away.

On July 15th our common beloved project – the summer school in Prague – started.

I keep thinking about Marie's lecture. For me, it was not an ordinary one. It was not just a case study with the necessary scientific references. At the end of the person's life the wish to analyse may be overcome by her need for synthesis. The case of the group mentioned in her lecture was somehow overshadowed by Marie's own personal fate, by her final personal message: that the world may be good, that the world is good. And, through natural reflection it means that the person herself is good, was good, that her life had a meaning. Indeed it had...her lecture closed with a touching symbol of a very large group: of thousands who were fed, nurtured, by mutual help.

The story of the summer school was touched by the death of the leader, even if most of the participants did not know her. The event has become part of the group dynamic matrix and it imprinted the group unconscious probably as a sort of sacrifice: in ancient times human sacrifices were offered when a new castle or fortress was founded...in order to placate the mighty unknown forces, to avoid anger, to secure the fate of the builders.

Actually, as the summer school started, I had the feeling that I had experienced during the sessions much less aggression than I had been expecting.

What I experienced, however, was a sort of difference in a certain task, which seemed new to me. (Was it a cultural difference?) Even though I have been accustomed, for years, to meet with colleagues from abroad, from western countries, here among the summer school participants I realized, probably for the first time, a difference in relation to the issue of gender. I experienced, probably for the first time in my life, how it may be when young males feel threatened by what they may see as women's power. I would say that this phenomenon may have entered our group social unconscious.

While I am here rethinking our situation again, I notice that three lectures out of four were given by us women (if it was vice versa certainly it would have given rise to gender based protests); I see that there was a rather threatening lecture on totalitarianism given by a woman (myself); and – probably first of all – there was that mystical death of the unknown mighty mother...no wonder that our mourning was so difficult, so painful! Our social unconscious was filled with difficult contents.

Now, I wish I'd been able to acknowledge the unspoken group wish of that time: that the group probably was longing for a strong father-saviour: the one who would be able to face-up-to the horrifying magic power of the women, who would be able to provide holding, comfort and safety for the group as a whole. Not that the wish of the group (to be protected by a strong good-enough father) had to be fulfilled, but it should have been acknowledged, understood and accepted. This is my debt to the LG and to myself.

Firstly, I have to ask myself whose was the longing for the strong father figure: was it the LG members? Was it mine? Do I distinguish? I hope I do. Also, they the participants may well have been immersed in their small group dynamics, which probably overshadowed the LG themes. This should not be forgotten.

Let me conclude: I was honoured and pleased indeed at having been invited and being able to participate actively at the summer school. I believe the project is very good indeed. I see it as useful for the participants and I was feeling very well in the company of our colleagues from home and from abroad. May the school continue, may we meet again and continue with this very useful and pleasant experience.

Helena Klímova

Prague Summer School or Lupus in Fabula

By Elizabeta Popovic

A few days before the Prague Summer School opening all participants got informed that Marie Hošková passed away.

I am back from Prague, some time has passed already, July 24th today...recovering from immense sadness, not quite knowing where it comes from...most probably the only worse thing than being in a group is not being in the group. This starts to sound like a love letter! But then, again, I think Lacan it was who said the only truly serious thing a man can write is a love letter (I have just made a lapsus calami writing “love matter”! - meant to be corrected immediately. Well, I would dare to add - a woman too. So, let this be my love letter to the Summer School. Not just the Prague Summer School but Belgrade Summer School as well. We have had two GASi Summer Schools up to now.

There is a funny word game in Spanish, children enjoy playing it very much. It goes: “If YOU are YOU and I am ME, who is more dumb?” If one says “YOU”, you’re caught! If one says “ME”, you’re caught again! But if we are we? What happens when we are we? What happened in Prague? In Belgrade too? What happened indeed? Well, I certainly don’t know. There is a saying one diplomat used to say: “It’s urgent to wait”.

But Henrik Ibsen said: “Don’t mind your own vanishing, because YOU have never been YOU, as far as I know. Do you really believe it would matter if you were to die ONCE AND FOR ALL?” (my translation, and do not take for granted: not “forever”, but “ONCE AND FOR ALL”).

“Lupus in fabula”, as the title of this letter means, “If you would die once and for all”. Why? Well, because...because it has become a kind of Summer School tradition to be held in the presence of death itself... more concretely, in the presence of the body, body assumed to be dead or dying for some instances in Belgrade - in the middle of the large group; or, in Prague, the body not yet buried nor mourned, somewhere near, but symbolically present here and now. Not just a body. The body of a staff member, father figure, mother figure, as you like it.

And wolf...well...wolf had its mentions in some Prague papers... but me, as a participant of the two Summer Schools we have had, and being a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a trainee in group

analysis, I feel like a patient of mine whom I transferred after 4 years of individual psychoanalytic psychotherapy to a group. In one of the early group sessions, out of the blue, he verbalized his feelings concerning his relationship to me and his passing from individual to group therapy (as well as the rest of group members). He said: “All of us here have been fed by the mother wolf, like Romulus and Remus”; interpreted as a fantasy about the therapist being a truly dangerous bloodthirsty creature able to devastate human flesh in seconds, who instead had nourished some helpless babies as her own flesh, protecting them and making them strong, as well as the fantasy that after a while they have grown up and made an empire! (the empire fantasy, due to early idealization in groups at the beginning of their lives). So, I feel like that patient of mine after two Summer Schools we have had. I feel that I’ve been given strong milk. I feel as if I have been dancing with death and it made me strong and very much alive. And surely, I am prone to idealizations too.

The day before the Prague Summer School opening I saw the Prague Astronomical Clock in the Old Town Square, and was mesmerized. Figures of Apostles appear, while Death striking time with the bell and figures representing Vanity, Greed and Pleasure moving one by one, though an Astronomer, a Chronicler, a Philosopher and an Angel (who looks like a woman with a sword and a shield) are standing still. It seems to be representation of what is to be honoured and dishonoured. I wouldn’t judge. It all seemed to me like a possible internal group of any of us.

Was this what occasionally happened in Prague? There was death playing again, similar to in Belgrade...with maybe a small but significant difference: during the Belgrade Summer School the staff was messing up. During the Prague Summer School staff was locked in a convent! Has this made us think: “How convenient!” Or: “Now we are free as they are safely under lock and key”. Might be. Anyway, all waters (presented papers, small groups, discussion groups, supervision groups, breaks) overflowed in the large groups, as they usually do - as far as I have seen - though I haven’t attended many conferences or other similar GA gatherings.

I shall try to pass on here a part of the Prague large groups’ Babylonian confusion of speech, the participants’ voices, as they occur in my memory at the moment:

- Hotness in the room, all sweating, barefoot men;
- “Just entering now I’ve had an association with a film: two are in love, but they just meet each other without the relationship being consumed, he always comes to her home on his beautiful white mare, then they just ride together for a while, she has a black male horse...but one day the male horse climbs on the mare starting intercourse...the man takes the gun and shoots his mare”;
- “We can smell each other’s bodies”;
- “It makes me feel close”;
- “I think it bothers me”;
- “I feel embarrassed to say this, but right now I feel a desire to hug a woman, a woman’s body”;
- “I have the need for us to get physically closer”;
- “One can’t do that in this kind of group”;
- “Why not?”;
- (...long negotiations about what is and what is not allowed in groups with high emotional investment...);
- “I’ve had a dream: walking through the zoo I spy a monkey (gorilla?), an alpha male who has covered his face with a kind of textile as if he doesn’t want to be seen”;
- (Men kind of joking about rivalry);
- One man gets up saying: “I feel the need to change places”;
- “Then do change”;
- (Man crossing the inner LG circle to sit on the chair facing the one he left);
- “Might be you have changed the seat now is showing some kind of dominance”;
- “Might be...”;
- “I have heard the staff are locked in a convent”;
- “It is true, with the doors closing at ten!”;
- “I have a room in the convent with four empty beds, just me and a mosquito”;
- “I’ve had a dream: there is a grave and a French bed beside it”;
- “Bed?”;
- “Which bed?”;
- “A big bed, for two?”;
- “First it occurred to me - *to die, to sleep no more*; but french bed...like eros and thanatos?”;

- “Yes”;
- “I’ve had an association of *le petit mort*”;
- “It is strange, we are all here faced with a loss, you who are from Prague, why don’t you speak about her, about Marie?”;
- “...we don’t want to bother you with our pain, many of you didn’t know her”;
- “But we want, we want to hear”;
- (... cry...);
- “I am sorry...she was so important to me...to us.”;
- “She gave us so much...”;
- “And now she is gone...and we don’t know how she did it...it was a kind of miracle the way she was working with patients... how to continue...”;
- “I didn’t know her, but caught myself staring at her photo there, in the other room...as if trying to know her...”;
- “I didn’t know her, but remember the shock when, a few days before the Summer School opening, we got the mail she passed away... I got absolutely lost, couldn’t reply till the next day, I clearly remember the feeling of not understanding what to do...”;
- “I didn’t know her either, but we all have heard her paper yesterday... and she put there such an interesting image – Jesus as a breast”;
- “...that’s her, that’s Marie, she was doing it in such a unique way...and now she left us, how to do it?”;
- “I didn’t know her either, but now recall the death of my grandmother, I loved her very much, spent a lot of time with her and had great times with her, but I remember entering her room the day she died, the room I knew so well, and was overwhelmed by the feeling that she had died and there are so many things about her I don’t know! She didn’t tell me! Left me without saying!”;
- “Now I recall the death of my father sixteen years ago...it was terrible”;
- “I recalled the death of my mother...yes...somehow it didn’t feel terrible...but... different...”;
- “I have lost both my mother and father recently, both in less than a month”;
- “I am so sorry...you haven’t said anything...it must be hard...”;

- “Yes, thank you...but I think I don’t feel like talking about it...”;
- “I lost my wife six years ago...I am not a group analyst but I’m here because of her, I suppose with the years I got to love what she loved...”;
- “But yesterday you crossed the room to take the other chair facing yours!”;
- “Yes, now I suppose I might have done it taking the other chair for her, as if she would be present too...in my small group we are talking about love, sex and intimacy, me, as a man, I feel amazed”;
- “It is wrong to try to make a small group out of a large group, it is not the same, the theory speaks about it, a large group is different because the feelings are different”;
- “I’ve had a dream: men fighting with knives in the streets, many dead bodies around, I woke up frightened”;
- “I have an association of Bluebeard”;
- “I’ve had an association of Macbeth”;
- “I smell women’s fragrances”;
- “I think this is becoming offensive for women”;
- “Makes me feel bad too”;
- “Me too, there is aggression towards women going on”;
- “I feel as if one man has been truthful saying: in my small group it is possible to talk about love, sex and intimacy, but then it provoked other men’s feelings of rivalry, frustration too, and the flight from fighting each other as well as from frustrated desire, so they started to express aggression towards women”;
- “Today I feel as if we are all free to deposit our faeces or urine and there is nothing wrong about it”;
- “I’ve had an association of a spider’s web”;
- “Yes, and the group is the spider!”;
- “We are all connected”;
- “I found a book on a bridge, and written on it was: read me and then leave me for someone else to find”;
- “I recall my training in working with heroin addicts and felt such a strong desire which induced me at times to try heroin”;
- “We are to part soon”;
- “Associations on spider...well, he makes this incredible and wonderful net to get fed,...and on addicts...it feels as if we are not sure if we are sated or sedated”.

At this moment I can't recall more, but the large group's time was up at the point when the talk had been going on about men's fear of potent women.

I was one of the members of the small group mentioned by one participant in the large group as a small group where "we are talking about love, sex and intimacy". What he said had been true, we were talking about it and about many other things as well. I believe the small group was amazingly well conducted by Luděk Vrba, we felt safe, connected and open. Well, at the end of the last session we kind of challenged the conductor (which, by the way, proves again how good his conducting has been) wanting to know more about how he felt. We also thanked him, feeling truly grateful. So, at the very end he told us that our small group – this group! – was supposed to have been conducted by Marie Hošková who had passed away, so he had been with us here and now instead of her.

If I try to think about what was going on in the Prague large groups, at first glance it all seems to me too "Freudian": oedipal passions and sexual drives accentuated as defences to near death experience. However, it seems this wouldn't cover it all, as human beings are more complicated than that. Kohut argues about two lines of development: psychosexual and narcissistic, presenting each with two metaphors: "guilty man" (Oedipus) and "tragic man" (Ulysses), insisting that each of us – every man – is both. The man of guilt (Oedipus) was more or less obvious in Prague – caught in a net of libidinal drives and defences. It is the tragic man that needs some clarification. Kohut is using Homer's story of Ulysses and Telemachus and introduces the term: "semi-circle of mental health". Ulysses, as he doesn't want to go to the war, starts to pretend to be insane, so he puts on a silly hat and "emissaries find him ploughing with an ox and an ass yoked together, flinging salt over his shoulders into the furrows". But Palamedes suspects it's a trick and throws Telemachus, Ulysses son, in front of his plough, and Ulysses immediately makes a semi-circle around his son and continues to plough. This metaphor doesn't deal with oedipal anxieties. It is not even just about father and a son. It deals with not sacrificing the other (others) in the name of one's (our) own needs or desires. The importance is obvious. But, I am writing it here in honour of our Prague colleagues and their sincere human impulse to protect the other (us) from their grief and loss. And their capacity to share grief once when called upon it by the other (us). I believe we have been loved well.

So, how did it happen that the large groups evolved around being or not being able to talk about sexuality? Lacan has noticed that analytic discourse eternally stumbles upon the same “symptom” – the insatiable desire for love, which (as an echo of the mirror stage relationship) strikes its roots in the analytic relationship itself, where we always find something not possible to verbalize but persistent in its demand to be recognized – which has to do with sexuality and the need to achieve completeness through the other.

On the other hand, we are living in a plastic age, an age of narcissistic hunger and consumer mentality. Sexuality is everywhere nowadays, actually, we encounter it each step we take walking through the streets, in newsstands, supermarkets, kiosks, back home on each screen. Nowadays sexuality really doesn't seem to be taboo. Nowadays, many say death is taboo. I would add love too. No one truly wants to know about both! It is embarrassing even to mention that death exists and that there is love. Everybody wants to live forever and everybody wants to feel “loved” by everybody and at whatever cost. But at the same time contemporary man mostly feels ashamed and afraid to love as well as to die. Love and death became kind of narcissistic injuries. Nevertheless, sexuality seems to be submitted to a kind of splitting, split-off from true love and intimacy.

At the end, what was it all about? Lupus being death? Lupus being love? Psychoanalysis knows that the proximity of death (loss, for example) often rouses vigorous libidinal replies. Acknowledged, accepted. There must have been something of this kind going on too. But what, just what, if springs of life were not only a mere reaction, but the source of it all? What if we were born through and in spite death? What if we have been fed by wolves? What if love, sex and intimacy really exist (only when three get to be one, the same) but can never be expressed properly by language (Lacan was joking about this inventing “l’amur” instead of “l’amour”, trying to say that love always strikes against “le mur” - the wall of words, of speech). What if life has always been older than death? What if lupus is always in fabula?

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My Liminal Experience in the Summer School of Prague

By Vagelis Thanellos

Before the summer school

I had various and mixed emotions, as I was preparing to join the summer school organized by GASI in Prague. Although I had been training in group analysis for a couple of years, it would be the first time to meet new people from all over the world within a group analysis context. It had also been a while since my last trip abroad; frankly, my international experience is far from extensive. Nevertheless, it had been increasingly clear to me that I had the need to step outside my comfort zone of familiarity, and to immerse myself in this so-called condition of liminality (as any self-respecting social anthropologist would). Moreover, this need was fuelled by recent developments in the relations between Greece and the E.U. at the time.

The aforementioned commotion left me with little (if any) time to think things through and get prepared for my visit to Prague. Actually, capital controls and the possibility of a Grexit made me think if it would be wise to be away at such a critical time. To that effect, a few days before my departure I contacted the organizers of the meeting to inquire about the possibility of cancelling my participation and seeking reimbursement. The meeting representatives were kind and empathetic, and that tipped me over into fulfilling my need to experience...the experience! At any rate, my departure had already begun.

In Prague

I arrived a day before and I was already pretty excited. By keeping a safe distance from anything intimate, familiar, or customary I was able to share and enjoy, I might say, a touristic identity. I was a foreigner without a clue of what to do or where to go. There was no schedule to follow and no obligation to fulfil but that of exploration. And Prague was just gorgeous! Only for a moment I felt tentative about language barriers. But then again, I thought, I had the language of group analysis to communicate with people attending the summer school.

Day 1

Following registration, attendees started coming together in a lecture hall; some people were conversing and others remained silent until a moment of generalized silence signified the start of a ceremony (or even a ceremonial ritual). The official summer school operations began with a formal announcement of Marie's passing and a moment of silence in her honour. Robbie Friedman had an oral presentation with the intriguing title "Thrills and Suspense" (how fitting that was to the underlying emotion!). He made a special note about the language barrier and how that should not hold us back. The note, itself, actually worked as a barrier in the moment. But very soon I would realize how relevant that note was, at least until the moment that I would start to unwind and give into the process. After all, as my supervisor says, it is "broken English" that is, mostly, international. Nevertheless, bodies were tight (mine definitely was) due to the "thrills and suspense" already initiated by the process.

It was time for the first large group. I must admit that my limited experience of such groups (a couple of times with groups no larger than 25-30 people) made me feel self-conscious, or even intimidated. As I would soon find out, that was expected, or even the purpose of such groups. Let's not forget what title of the summer school was: "who's afraid of groups?"!

Relevant considerations were shared in the group by many. We discussed how the language barrier may mediate or even shape our intended meanings, and how our own expectations for the "thrills and suspense" of the summer school may mould ongoing processes (for the particular group per se). One of the participants shared a reflection on his experience with large groups, and how his emotions run a course ranging between tension and release (in the body); interestingly, his experience resonated with most participants' experience. The ice had cracked. People started to introduce themselves and get to know each other. I recall that one of the first questions addressed to me was with regards to the political situation in Greece. I remember that my response was restrained, if not neutral, in an effort to avoid perceptions about myself as an individual based on news headlines. It was around that time that one of the participants offered a connection; it was either a movie or a dream (I think it was a dream after a movie) where a horse-rider killed his horse after

having sex with it. I am thinking, now, that maybe that dream had some significance for what was to follow, or was even a fantasy about it. From that point on I feel that our genuine considerations (or, even, points of negotiation) came into focus: the countless combinations and permutations of conceptual possibilities as a result of large group interactions, respective compromises for the sake of integration, and where “we were coming from”. Moreover we discussed our liminal “space”, (I put my story of experience until this very moment) our potential differences, and the tension that accompanies such a negotiation. A participant eloquently described this process as “an effort to locate, or more precisely to re-locate oneself”. I identified with that description. As one of the group leaders said we were processing our state of liminality, while we were experiencing it. I guess the drinks and social gatherings that followed at the end of the day were not only welcome but also necessary to entertain a full day!

Day 2

The day started with a small group meeting. The discussion got lively very quickly (possibly in resonance to the proceedings of the previous day). We started off by commenting on incidental delays, absences and empty chairs. We negotiated whether we should continue wearing our name tags, and how these tags either intensified or down-regulated the distance between us. We talked about our countries of origin as well as common fantasies and stereotypes associated with different countries. We further discussed hostile reactions among some group members, and how such reactions may be mediated by personal projections and cultural residues. Last but not least, we talked about Marie and her picture in the lecture hall. Some members that knew her became emotional at the moment.

At the end of day I felt that my apprehension had significantly increased and I started to fantasize my leaving, and to negotiate with myself that I had the right to step out (not to mention my relatively cynical commemoration of my supervisor who had convinced me to join the summer school). My participation in the discussion group (where we mainly talked about Marie and her contribution to title of the summer school) and supervision group was limited.

The large group of Day 2 was the only one for which I decided not to sit in the inner circle. Interestingly, I ended up sitting close to a

couple of members of the small group that I had joined earlier... Nevertheless, I was taken by the dynamics of the large group. It became increasingly clear to me that the large group had a life of its own - something that I put together at the end of the day. As any complex organism, the group as a whole experienced emotions of sadness and loneliness; anger towards an inexplicable void that we were not able to fill. And as any organism living in a social context, the negotiation of pertinent limitations was inevitable. In our case such limitations were discussed under the light of group analysis pre-dispositions in comparison to other approaches to psychotherapy that incorporate bodily movement (c.f. body tension). To this effect, one of the members that had the fantasy of getting up and filling up the empty chair was invited (or challenged) to do so. One of the leaders offered an interesting reflection/ interpretation: the group after identifying and negotiating its boundaries allowed a transition, a new boundary. The latter came after a comment on the group's collective space, and how it also functioned as a ceremony for a lost body/space (that of Marie's), bringing up the issue of death, as articulated, for the first time; filling up the empty chair was a play action facilitating a change in the narrative.

The notion of body gradually became the centre of discussion. Relative associations between the body and senses (e.g., odours), bodily constitution as well as respective sexual connotations were expressed. I started missing my conceptual taxonomies that suddenly became quite fluid. Familiar notions, symbolisms and their connotations were shaken bringing up the need of intimacy (of another but familiar body). I was tentative to express all that, since it was easy to anticipate the sexual associations that would be triggered in the mind of myself and others. Obviously, not only death, but Eros, as well, were points of concern for the group. However, I define Eros and death as something more than a sexual drive; in this context, I mean as a metaphor for the life and death of the very large group (community of the summer school). I had a reflection that I shared with the group; although yesterday we were concerned with the tension brought by distance between members that meet for the first time, today we were increasingly concerned with the tension brought by intimacy! The loss of distance and dissociation brought us closer to discussing inherent desires and needs which, in turn, stirred plenty of anxiety. Indeed, the group was in a process of re-location, attempting

a new form of integration; in other words the group had entered a state of liminality.

Day 3

The day started again with the smaller group meeting. The group was quite lively and energetic. Feelings of loss and grief as well as absences experienced by group members became the central topic. That was an underlying tension with regards to the invisibility of a particular member; grief took a life form in that invisibility. At that time it became quite clear that Marie's pre(ab)sence had a defining impact for the summer school. One particular comment stayed with me: "grief transcends to a state of loneliness" *with*, the others I would concern now (even when excluding them). Death of a loved one is one of those things that you can fully realize only after it has already taken place, even if you have experienced its imminence for a while. Regardless of how much you have prepared for it, actual grief processes are activated right there and then. One thing was certain; I was becoming a part of a whole by experiencing everything as a part of a whole; where ever I was, whatever I was doing I was thinking of the large group and everything that remained to be seen in those meetings.

My recollection of the lecture of the day was a thought that crossed my mind in response to Marie's picture; she seemingly had a teasing gaze. Instantly, I thought about the title of the summer school "who's afraid of groups", and the task behind it. That was a recurrent thought for many of us. My last thought about the lecture was mostly concerned with what was left unsaid...

The most enriched discussion group of all the days was that of Day 3. We discussed old and new countries (e.g., the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) as well as their states, historical traumas and the possibility of new conceptualizations. I distinctively recall someone referring to "Macedonia" - FYROM to me – that put me in a double "in between" *thesis* (in the group) and I resonated as: Due to recent developments in my own country, polarization is the running theme of most political interactions, whereas I strive to ascertain a moderate position. This usually puts me in opposition with most people, since the dominant tendency is: "if you are not one of us, you are against us". On the other hand, even though I consider myself a person of moderate views I was uncomfortable with the (provisional) name 'Macedonia', and I had to be honest about it. Furthermore, a

couple of issues of ethical considerations were brought up: a) sexual relations among members of GASI; and b) the introduction of a person into a group whom the community group views as unsuitable although the conductor thinks otherwise. I distinctively remember thinking about inclusions and exclusions, dichotomies and the need to meet somewhere in the middle under novel terms. The song ‘Which Side Are You On’ covered by Natalie Merchant came into my mind and I expressed it. Then I said that I feel like “We are all looking for a place to fit ourselves and others; it is likely that the space in between us and others is that place. It is even more likely that a group is no man’s land”.

In the supervision group the notion of the end and the inevitability of a new beginning was central. Such notions were triggered by the internal workings of two separate groups. The first group was concerned with the matrix of privacies that had developed after years of working together, signifying the end of the group; in the second group it was the conductor that felt the need for more privacy, again, signifying the end of the particular group. What was becoming increasingly clear to me was that different groups, as communicating vessels, were internally connected. That realization had me looking forward to upcoming large group meetings.

In the large group of Day 3, Marie’s loss became a central topic and had us all wondering whether such a recurrence meant the upgrade of the issue to an actual group task. We all shared thoughts and feelings about absences in our own lives and how words are often insufficient to fill in the void. We also discussed the non- optional nature of choices. Any time you go with something you leave something behind...I shared a thought I had several years ago while in therapy: I would actually become an adult when my parents would pass away. I also shared my reflection of how Marie’s loss (and grief over her loss) differentiated group members on the basis of those that knew her and those that didn’t (insiders vs. outsiders). Even if grief over Marie’s loss was personally experienced, it was still a collective memory for some but not for others. Nevertheless, both insiders and outsiders were parts of a whole containing every single one. As the group leader succinctly put it, we all had shared our own losses chipping away one more barrier. Free association over our collective unconscious had brought us closer to what we were co-creating in that gathering.

Day 4

By Day 4 it was clear to me that the summer community had its own history, its own social unconscious. A comprehensive form, possibly a meaning, was revealed to me.

The day started with a member sharing a dream with the small group. The dream depicted a graduation and the member described the accompanying anxiety that (s)he experienced crystallized in one question: how much time do we have to reach intimacy? (Said resonating with somebody else)

After the lecture I was taken by the realization that the summer school was pervaded with the notion of historical trauma. Emotionality was palpable, even in the lecture. It occurred to me that we were attempting to “fix” collectivity. It is as if we were a research group contemplating the nature of memory in an effort to surpass time.

In the discussion group others resonated with my realization of the centrality of trauma as a running theme. A German member referred to the historical stigma of Nazism, and I responded with my reflection of how trauma, in the form of stigma, may facilitate self-awareness.

The issues of self and national/collective identity had become the running themes of the day. It felt as if we concentrated our energy on identifying what was common rather than different between us, in an effort not to avoid conflict but to allow integration. However, when you are telling a story you need to choose what to include and what to exclude in order to support the intended plot. And the time left was limited and pushing for a distinction between a true and/or false (collective) self. Interestingly, the provisional title: “True or False?” was “proposed” for the day. It occurred to me that we were looking for a collective memory, a new identity that made me wonder: to collect what?

The issue of group composition was brought up in the supervision group. It appears that the conductor’s family history inevitably shapes the final form of the group, and the question of ‘true or false’ resurfaced. I would say that in order for one to create a group one must re-create a family. In the process of collecting the components of a team, a conductor, in a sense, recollects components of his/her own history. This perpetual process of re-creation and recollection felt like a perpetual search for the object of ‘a good mother’. (Note: in my case all lecturers and group leaders were females).

In the large group meeting the issues of re-creation and sex had surfaced. In addition, many concerns were expressed about hierarchies and resulting discriminations, especially those related to women's oppression (as reflected in the limited vital room they occupied within the large group). History and trauma were present, once again, in the form of gender inequality. In addition, there was a diffuse sense of urgency to resolve all raised issues. This sense of urgency was crystallized in the following member reflection: "although I carefully listen to everyone, I can safely say that I understand only a portion of what is being said". The conductor succinctly commented (especially from a group analytic point of view) that we all hear only a portion of what is being said, and that this portion is never the same. That last comment raised our anxiety levels about the imminent end of the summer school even higher. Another conductor suggested that the matrix had delineated the issues that we were open (or not) to discuss in order to reach intimacy while avoiding aggression.

As for me, I felt less tense these last days, I think because I relocated myself from the feeling of loss on entry to the summer school, and I gave myself the emotional space to do that, maybe because I had not expected this searching, this trauma-centredness and this re-collective searching. I felt like we were collectors. Looking back, I think that by that time I had already found my space in the summer school community, and I was a part of the particular whole by engaging in its social unconscious.

Final Day ("4 Sessions with A Happy End")

The issue of connection and disconnection very quickly became dominant; as well as the issue of conflict. One member characteristically said that it felt as if he needed to bring a bulletproof vest or armour.

Our collective fear of the future was projected to one particular member with a single question: "Aren't you concerned about the future?" (Intriguingly, that member was the one that had earlier shared his/her graduation dream). I think that the group, as a metaphor, was conceptualized as a "course", which had to be passed. Interestingly, I remember that at registration day, I had forgotten to choose a small group; I'd done it afterwards.

We all resonated with a sense of relief that the group closed with a sense of integration, safety and equality - all necessary prerequisites

to reach intimacy. I was surprised by the efficiency of the process; all of that in only four sessions! We succeeded to move from a state of apprehension triggered by our inherent differences, our fear of loss and frustration, our sense of disconnection and liminality to a state of closeness and intimacy. A space of co-existence. I guess we all graduated after all...

The (Very) Last Large Group

The group started with jokes and with an overall lighter mood. I was already overwhelmed with emotions - I had just finished my small group meeting. Although I was ready to resume my touristic identity since I would stay slightly longer in Prague, my updated fantasy was that of me walking around the city, alone. "You stole my touristic identity", I joked in a bittersweet mode. My sense of an end was intensified not only by ceremonial activities, such as the farewell dinner the night before, but also by the company we shared beyond the meeting's work; we were already transforming into a "society".

The "end" of the summer school seemed to come. At this moment a dream came on, from last night: he saw a spider that weaved a web, and there was also a vacuum cleaner that made him anxious. Many associations were tried, but a repeating motif popped up, and we passed for a while... The issues of gender inequality and totalitarian styles of communication resurfaced once again. Such considerations were transferred to our leaders. I expressed my projection of our female conductor that reminded me of a 'grandmother' figure due to a sense of safety that she issued. Following a trans-generational approach our male conductor inadvertently became a 'grandfather' figure.

I would say that a playful disposition characterized the atmosphere of that last group. Free association even led us to a discussion about faeces. Several associations were offered, ranging from toilets as ergonomically designed repository locations to pertinent developmental aspects of defecation. In the case of developing infants, playing with faeces may even symbolize creative processes. Interestingly, a member suggested and the rest resonated that faeces management symbolize acceptance and internalization of a series of conditions-prerequisites for civilization.

The 'grandfather' – conductor looked very serious throughout our discourse (at the playful time) over faeces. A member noticed and

commented on it. The conductor shared his sense that with our playful mood we likely resisted embracing the imminent end. Issues relating to power, equality and totalitarianism re-emerged. The same member that had commented on the issue of solemnity offered another association. She had previously worked in a detoxification centre for heroin users, and at the moment (and possibly for the first time) she wondered how heroin must feel. The interpretation offered was in reference to the end of the group (and the user-members I would add).

I also had a free floating association in response to the heroin association. I thought about one of the many Greek slang terms for heroin; namely, the word ‘*παραμύθα*’ that means ‘fairy-tale’. Interestingly, Greek nouns have different declension patterns based on gender with respective types of endings (masculine, feminine, neutral). In the case of the slang term ‘*παραμύθα*’ (i.e., fairy-tale), the gender is feminine. I also thought about grandmothers and how they are symbolized as ultimate story tellers. Another thought that crossed my mind was a quote that reads as follows: “fairy-tales are not only to put children to bed, but to also motivate adults”. The conductor commented that a grandmother may not only be a suppressed, weak woman, but may also have access to symbolisms and knowledge that may prove dangerous.

More dream associations were expressed. One member recalled a dream he had before he came to Prague, where he dreamed about a tarantula that he had to move outside the house, a process that possibly killed it. Others made comments about types of spiders available in different parts of the world that carry a foul odour. The latter led us again to a discussion about gender and national cultures, and how such ties became less rigid during the summer school. I would say that such a transition, itself, is a state of negotiation.

Another member that arrived in Prague a day before the gathering’s commencement shared that while wondering the streets of Prague and experiencing the aforementioned transition she found a book. This was a special case of a ‘traveling’ book full of messages and/or stories. This is a new trend, and whoever finds this book writes a message/story, brings it home and leaves it for the next one to find it. Seemingly, the end was near, and everyone would take something with them and would communicate it back home. And this is how the group came to closure in a positive tone.

The Very Last Dream

Although many thoughts were expressed in reference to the dream just discussed, I was left with a sense that some things remained untold. To this effect, I would like to share some further associations that I've had since then.

As we approached the end of the summer school it felt as we were moving away from a liminal state towards a new, updated identity. The network that had developed, like the spider's web, was sticky keeping us together, but we had to move on. The fear of obliteration is always present; the vacuum of the external world may swallow our experiences and eradicate their impact. This induced sense of fellowship, as experienced within the confined borders of the summer school, is now diffused into the wider summer school society. The fear of what may actually be transferred and/or generalized to the outer social world remains a realistic consideration in such a totalitarian world. Many of us contemplated whether the particular dream was, somehow, connected to Marie's task.

A series of questions were stirred about the dream's symbolizations as time went by:

- a) What is so threatening about the connective tissue in the communication network (the spider's web)?
- b) Why is there a need for an additional threat in the form of a vacuum that swallows everything?
- c) And if the spider's web is our matrix, who's the spider in our case?
- d) What is the inter-relation of all related symbols?
- e) Moreover, how did all of our associations of the last day relate to our comprehensive experience of the gathering?

There was a need to discriminate the ins and outs, what was worth metabolizing and what had to be discarded. There was a need to set boundaries. Where our emotive/cognitive repository should be placed? Inside or outside? What sort of a record of our experience should we put in our traveling book? Where can we drop our book? Will the outside world swallow us? I experienced fear and anxiety that some of the things that I learned will be forgotten or left unnoticed in so much white noise. And if we allow it, the network that we built can turn into dust or even dirt that world's vacuum will wipe

out. The need to step out was irrepressible in order to avoid getting stuck to the web, become a stinky tarantula or self-destruct.

The social unconscious of the summer school community is the spider. A complex organism that built its web, and fed itself. However, for the spider to save oneself from its own venom (i.e., its creation) it must leave it behind. We must not be harsh or totalitarian with our fears, but we should neither avoid nor anaesthetize them (cf., heroine). Our summer school experience may seem like a ‘fairy-tale’ (in a fairy-tale-looking city like Prague), but as it happens with fairy-tales they may become dangerous. Our summer school experience may fade away into oblivion, or become a fairy-tale to tell others (also attested by our summer school ‘grandmother’ figure). Our social unconscious unwound its own story.

These days, we negotiated our “location”, we tried to re-established our world, we re-constructed our “fixed: ideas, we re-repeat much storytelling, we entered in a (re-) civilizing process. We now are re-located. Who knows, maybe this was Marie’s task after all.

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Some Reflections on the GASi Summer School in Prague

By Leah Chaikin

When I try to write now, I feel a bit like before the summer school in Prague: I write to a newsletter in English, not sure I'll be able to express accurately what I want to say. Maybe I won't translate my thoughts and feelings from my mother-tongue correctly. A lot of unknown people will read my thoughts and experiences in English, and I won't meet most of them in the near future. And if I do, will we know who is who?

Those were just a few of the thoughts I had the days before the summer school begun. The background setting was undoubtedly different than I have now, sitting at home with my familiar desktop and window. Prague, with its stunning combination of antiquity and modernism, history and contemporariness, pain and power, stood there in the background, inducing a feeling of interest and adventure before I met a single person from the conference.

The structure of the conference was diverse: it had 5 large groups, 4 small groups, 3 lectures followed by medium-size discussion groups, 3 supervision groups, 2 conductors for the larger groups, and 1 conductor for the small group. Each participant registered for the groups which he or she wanted to join, so I had met with 7 different conductors, and many participants. In the beginning it seemed like an attack on my senses: frequent group switches, the variety of conducting styles, different topics for discussions, different ways of thinking in each group and different tasks in each session. Eventually that enabled a wide acquaintance with different participants, different voices with different accents, and different ways of working – but it also enabled me to discover that we have a lot in common and that in the final account, we all really speak the same language – the language of groups.

It was a great opportunity to meet colleagues and know people from different countries that run groups, love groups and think groups. There was the thin tension between the personal and the interpersonal, between closeness and distant acquaintance, between interpersonal relationships and relationships based on being all members of the same space, the same experiment, the same unique language, and more or less the same phase in our professional development.

The death of Maria Hošková, shortly before the conference, and her funeral the day after, accompanied the various meetings. I didn't know her personally, but both her presence – her personality, and the paper she wrote knowing she won't be able to read – and her absence, were very real and painted the conference in meaningful colours.

I don't know how to describe what the conference was for me, so maybe I'll just write down a few of the thoughts I had in the weeks that followed:

- I've realized again how a common interest can unite, bind and enable a discourse, like a campfire around which people can gather but also enable them to talk about different things like mourning, body, fear, politics, difficulties and relationships;
- I've understood that war stays and sustains long after it's over. The impressions scorched into the city and in the peoples souls are inherited this way or another, and maybe never forgotten. The war keeps its existence through memories, unconsciousness, and places. It changes forms and faces, and its influence is deep and established under the ground, and what grows above contains parts of it;
- I've recognized that many of my preliminary thoughts were proven false during the meetings, and that what I thought as obvious and evident is not always true. Nothing is more gladdening than shaking prejudices and inadequate expectations, than discovering that not all chronicles are known in advance. It enables so much interest and hope.

In the farewell dinner on the last evening of the conference there was a feeling of acquaintance, known faces, even the beginnings of new friendships that developed in so short a time. It can happen on other occasions, but for me – as a first time participant in such a conference, and as the single participant from my country – that was a special experience. To discover again that this thing that develops between people is related not only to culture and location, but also to will, to common topics, to curiosity, to internal feelings and intuitions, and to the isolated space in which we stayed. When I toured Prague after the conference was over I was pleased to know that the city is seeded with people I know, even if for short time, and even if it will be a long time before we meet again.

Being in a foreign country, far from the familiar, from family and friends, without the usual supportive envelope, influenced the way I spoke in the various groups, and enabled a different kind of communication, which was new to me. This experience, with all the difficulties it had, opened new development channels, which still resonate inside me in many directions. Sometimes I have longings for this space, isolated from my daily life, which allows me to attach with the professional community of groups, if I may call it so. Longings for that space, which was fascinating, rich, enriching and colourful.

Leah Chaikin

Israel

GASI Summer School Report, Prague, July 2015

By Ruhsen Sevketoglu



Introduction

Who is afraid of groups? Not I, surely, was my initial thought when I saw the title of the Summer School. I am Kurdish, we live for groups, we thrive off groups and we cannot bear to be away from groups. Coming from a large family and a wide friendship group would confirm I am not afraid of groups. Little did I know I was in for a journey that would turn what I believed to be true about myself, on its head. An experience that was both challenging and eye-opening.

GASI Summer School Prague, July 2015

I arrived a day early in Prague to allow me time to explore and get acquainted with my environment. The first morning before the start of the summer school I was walking along Charles Bridge and came across a book under the statue of John of Nepomuk. John of Nepomuk (c. 1345 – March 20, 1393) is a national saint of Bohemia, who was drowned in the Vltava river at the behest of Wenceslaus, King of the Romans and King of Bohemia. Later accounts state that he was the

confessor of the queen of Bohemia and refused to divulge the secrets of the confessional. On the basis of this account, John of Nepomuk is considered the first martyr of the Seal of the Confessional, a patron against calumnies and, because of the manner of his death, a protector from floods and drowning. Rather fitting start to the start of my journey of the summer school. I wondered at the time, would the group let me drown? Would I confess all my sins?

The book itself was called 'Baden Baden' with a note that said 'No I am not lost, read me then leave me anywhere you wish – I've been around the world'. Immediately I was captivated by this moment yet also a little paranoid. I remember looking around to see if I was being watched from afar. As I stood there clutching the book with both a huge smile and feeling special that I had somehow been chosen to be part of this exclusive group. A group that would never meet but the phantasy that we all at one time held this book and somehow I was feeling the emotions previous readers had felt. I felt intensely connected to these strangers who somehow felt familiar. This was also the same feeling I had when I was sat amongst strangers at the first lecture. Somehow these strangers felt so familiar. I found myself looking at their faces and seeing friends and in some funny situations, celebrities. This familiarity somehow made me connected instead of alone against many. The lecture was enticing and gripping but yet in the background just like Marie's photos was grief and loss. And it was that very feeling of grief and loss that I found connected me to my fellow colleagues in the days to come. The large group was particularly difficult as I was one of the last to enter and there at the front was a seat with a huge sign that said Ruhsen's seat. No other seat in my path was clear. I walked awkwardly and uncomfortably to the seat at the front. Throughout the first half of the session I felt my heart pounding and thoughts racing. The level of anxiety I felt was even a surprise to me. At one point I put a hand to my heart in hope that it would ease the anxiety. Nothing seemed to work. At that moment I realised I must talk because if I don't then this anxiety will consume me. I managed to clear my throat and utter a sentence about what was happening for me. I saw a few nods and smiles in the sea of people and slowly I felt my anxiety wash away. I was still anxious for the remainder of the big group but it was not going to kill me. The social on the first night was very much filled with energy and enthusiasm. I was naturally finding connections to other members. Links

were merging between members from UK; perhaps we had mutual colleagues or had attended the same University. We were all filled with curiosity and wanted to meet and greet all. Never having attended a GASI workshop I was left excited and curious about what was to come but also nervous and a little apprehensive.

By day two subgroups were emerging, as expected by the group process. I found myself being drawn to those familiar and comfortable. The large group was already proving to be scary; a sea of mystery and danger. It was as though we needed another group to anchor through the large group. I found myself swimming among those who were of similar age, culture and background. Together we were able to comfort one another and freely explore our phantasies that we felt were unsafe to explore in the large group. What is it I feared about the large group? Rejection? Perhaps acceptance? Spent my life feeling different and here was a large group of people drawn to similar work as myself. What is it that's drawn all these people to this this therapeutic work. Do we all have something in common, something that connects us to this work? I feared finding out, therefore I feared sharing with the large group. I was comfortably sat at the back in the corner with a full view of the room. An audience to the goings on. I was able to step back and really be in the moment and reflect on my feelings. I found with being able to create this space I felt a lot calmer and safer. I was enjoying being in the moment and listening to my fellow colleagues and letting them take me in directions my mind would have otherwise not wondered to.

By day three the process of having to attach and reflect every day with different people was starting to take its toll on my spirit. I was finding myself exhausted by the encounters, the phantasies and mysteries. We would spend the day engaging in the groups and then spending the evening reflecting on the events of the day. My day, my night and even my dreams seemed to be consumed by this experience. I started to recognize my fear of groups. Towards the end of day three it became apparent that what seemed to connect the group is grief and loss. The death of Marie which was very much in the background from the first lecture was now at the core of everyone who knew her and even those who did not. The raw emotions around grief and loss surrounded us all. This was very much evident in the large group. I found myself sat between two members both connected to the same grief. I remember feeling the sadness and loss that had

consumed both. I felt my tears in my throat as well as on the edge of my eyes. In that moment I felt connected to the group in a way that I had not imagined. The connection felt strong and powerful. And for me it proved that although experience can divide us, emotions can bring us together. I remember leaving the large group feeling sad but hopeful.

By day four I felt a lot lighter in my soul. The day before allowed me to release all those difficult feelings I was holding onto safely. I was a lot more comfortable to be together with the group or to have moments alone in the break without the fear of offending others or being perceived as awkward. I found my self-drawn to those I had not had a chance to connect one to one and felt a strong need to make time for them. The ending felt close and I wanted to have the time to meet those I may not ever meet again. I wanted to leave with no regrets. The social in the evening naturally formed subgroups of those we had spent most time with and felt most comfortable to be among. Towards the end of the evening when I felt at ease and safe I was able to go alone and explore like a child who feels a secure safe attachment and is able to discover the world around him knowing the mother is there, ready to take care if he falls. I was able to make connections with people I had not had a chance to, because like I and everyone else, they were drawn to those who they felt most safe with. I was able to have open and honest conversations and discovered so much that it almost left me grief stricken that we were at the end of this experience and I had missed on a chance to connect with so many other people.

The final day was a mixture of relief and grief. The small group was difficult. I encountered what I fear most, about being in groups, being misunderstood! My good intentions were translated to be something but. The rupture was a tear through my soul. I had an audience to witness my demise. I felt misunderstood and attacked by the group. I could feel my self sinking and wishing I could disappear. Suddenly in that moment I was rescued by one of the members I had grown close to so instead of being drowned like John of Nepomuk. The member was able to articulate my emotions in a way that I wasn't. Although I was saddened and upset by this encounter; it made me realise that in order to solve anything in life that there has to be room for certain level of uncomfortableness and confrontation. To learn to sit with difficult feelings and not to feel like you are drowning. The

last big group was powerful and although it was filled with silences at best part there was a lot of communication going on through a smile, a look, a nod, a touch and understanding. Acknowledgments were being made across the room. I found myself looking at each member with a story, a connection that had formed. These people in big and small ways had shaped my present life. We were all brought together in this unique experience and for me it will remain a memorable one that I shared and learnt a lot about myself through others.

It's not the end, it's to be continued. Although my experience at the Summer school was short lived the experience and the work continues. The summer school was a time in my life I will always remember and hold close. As I have limited experience of groups this was a unique opportunity to connect to groups of people on a therapeutic level and dive into the unknown and reflect on the here and now. Life has become chaotic and busy, not leaving us much time to stay still and reflect. Often caught up in life's mishaps. The group allowed me to connect to people in a way I had never done before. A short but intense experience. An experience I am keen to take up and explore again.

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Group Analytic Concepts: Ethics

NOTE BY COMPILER: I have trawled the literature of Group Analysis but discovered little on the subject of ethics in our literature. Even in the recent and excellent text by Harold Behr and Liesel Hearst, *Group-Analytic Psychotherapy: A Meeting of Minds*, there are only a couple of paragraphs specifically about ethics and tangential references to ethics in a few other places in the book. Otherwise, in those Group Analytic texts that do mention ethics, ethics seems to be referred to in a highly abstract way, more akin to a general sense of morality, rather than something that bears on the “coal face” of clinical practice, the difficulties and dilemmas of that practice. Most of the useful literature originates from the USA.

“I believe that most heinous feelings and behaviours are neurotic overlays, and that underneath we are all motivated by the wish and need to love and be loved. However, I cannot always maintain this view when I deal with other human beings, and if I cannot feel this fundamental acceptance of the person I’m working with, my feelings eventually will become discernible and will undermine the treatment experience. This is why an ethical imperative for therapists to be introspective exists.

It is not ethical to continue a treatment with someone for whom you have lost your ability to be genuinely empathic. If you permanently lose your empathy with an individual patient, you need to end the treatment. However, if the patient is in a group, you must ponder a second question before deciding whether you can continue: Did what the patient reveal irreparably damage the group climate? One factor is whether the person has so alienated others that most or all of the group members have lost their empathy for that person. Another aspect, which is relevant to the dilemma described, is whether others are feeling so put off that the group is no longer a place where they can do the work they came to do”.

“One aspect of effective group work is to be certain that professional and ethical standards are followed. To ensure this, you might get appropriate supervision for your work. Because a standard of practice is to be trained in the skills you are teaching, it is essential that you, as the leader, possess the knowledge and skills to be covered by the focus of the group...”

Lise Motherwell and Joseph J. Shay. *Complex Dilemmas in Group Therapy: Pathways to Resolution*. Routledge, 2005.

“...ethical analyses typically rely only on ethical principles (principlism). Though this approach may represent standard practice among group therapists, it must be emphasized that many ethicists do not accept principlism as the only or best way to solve ethical dilemmas. A partial list of alternative theories includes virtue ethics (as mentioned above), casuistry, geocultural ethics, and feminist ethics. These approaches also have supporters and critics.”.

Roback, H & Moore, R. (2007). On the Ethical Group Psychotherapist. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 57(1), 49-59.

“In the training of the group psychotherapist, considerable attention is devoted to the mastery of theory and technique that will enable the therapist to be effective in helping members to meet their individual and group goals. Cultivating the ethical group psychotherapist-training the therapist to be knowledgeable about ethical principles and be able to use them in everyday decision-making in the course of conducting psychotherapy groups-is a task that historically has been embraced with far less assiduousness. Basic textbooks on group psychotherapy might not include even a single chapter on ethical and legal issues. Introductory courses may confine treatment of the topic to a mere class session. Yet, intensive attention to this dimension of training of the group therapist is warranted. When exposed, ethical and legal errors made by group psychotherapists endanger the public’s trust in psychotherapy in general and group psychotherapy specifically. Further, effective group work requires ethical practice”.

“Beyond a mastery of rules and laws, decision-making about ethical issues requires the group psychotherapist’s possession of additional tools. The therapist must have knowledge of those basic ethical principles operative in any helping relationship and an ability to identify circumstances in which these principles may be in conflict with one another. The therapist must also possess a systematic decision-making process to resolve conflicts satisfactorily and develop an ethically defensible course of action. Finally, the therapist must be a person of character: the group psychotherapist must have both an internalized system of values and behavioural dispositions enabling

him or her to use these ethical/legal instruments well in solving particular conflicts”.

Brabender, V. (2006). The Ethical Group Psychotherapist. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 56(4), 395-414.

“Confidentiality in group psychotherapy is more complicated than in individual therapy because self-disclosure is at the core of group therapy and there are numerous people hearing the disclosures. Confidentiality in group therapy, once ignored in the literature on ethics, is gaining more attention as this modality becomes more widely practiced; so too is an acknowledgement that ethical dilemmas surrounding confidentiality in groups are commonplace”.

“Pope and Vetter (1992) found the most common dilemma for individual therapists involved confidentiality. In group psychotherapy, issues of confidentiality are even more complicated. Welfel (1998) outlined how issues of confidentiality in groups differ from those in individual therapy. In addition to disclosing personal information to a therapist, the group client discloses information to other group members with no guarantee that those others will keep that information private. The very effectiveness of the treatment is based on the interdependence and interaction among group members that entails the mutual disclosing of personal material”.

Lasky, G.B., & Riva, M.T. (2006). Confidentiality and privileged communication in group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 56, 455-476.

“Today, informed consent is an essential part of the ethical practice of group psychotherapy...Ethics Guidelines...state that the therapist “shall provide...clients with information about the nature of group psychotherapy and apprise them of their risks, rights and obligations as members of the therapy group.” In terms of the five principles of ethical practice, issues of informed consent primarily involve autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence. Most often these principles work in tandem to guide the practitioner in providing the best care possible for the client. Sometimes, however, as will be evident in our discussion, these principles are in conflict, creating ethical dilemmas for the therapist”.

“Informed consent means that patients must understand what their treatment options are, including other types of treatment or no

treatment at all. While we all possess some biases about what we think may be best for a patient with particular problems, we must ethically offer a non-judgmental snapshot of what the alternatives might be. Patients should always be encouraged to do their own research and/or to seek a second opinion. We are especially required to inform patients of available and viable alternatives”.

Fallen, A. (2006). Informed consent in the practice of group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 56, 431-454.

“The central dilemma with regard to record keeping in group psychotherapy - a conflict over beneficence versus autonomy and non-maleficence - is whether to keep records separately for each individual group member or to keep one record for the group as a whole. If records are kept for the group as a whole, which may correspond more closely to the way the therapist experiences and reflects upon the group work, who would have access to them and who could release them? However, if records are kept for individuals, it may be difficult to capture the context of an individual’s comments and behaviour. How does the therapist best describe the client’s relationships to others in the here-and-now group? The challenge is how to maintain the confidentiality of each group member while still being able to capture the flow, themes, and patterns of the group session. Clearly, the issues regarding confidentiality of records, patient access to records, and release of information are more complex for group psychotherapists than for individual psychotherapists”.

Knauss, L.K. (2006) Ethical issues in record keeping in group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 56, 15-430.

“As therapists, we have an ethical responsibility to our patients to be clear about our fee practices and policies. When we successfully confront the tension between our role as healers and business people, we can provide our patients an opportunity to explore their anger, esteem, and dependency conflicts regarding money. In addressing our own ambivalence we can offer our patients a truly valuable gift-direct and honest exploration about money.

Our perceptions of and experiences with money influence our relationships to others. Reciprocally, our interpersonal relationships can

have a profound effect on our experience of money. Group therapy provides a powerful context for exploring how money is linked with the darkest and most intimate aspects of our patients' lives. By encouraging ourselves and our patients to delve into the manifest and latent significance of financial interactions in treatment, we uncover buried treasure—a richer understanding of the self'.

Shapiro, E.L., & Ginzberg, R. (2006). Buried treasure: Money, ethics and countertransference in group therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 56, 477-494.

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Compiled by Terry Birchmore

Citations and Abstracts from Other Journals

Mangione, L. et al. (2007). Ethics and endings in group psychotherapy: saying good-bye and saying it well. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*. 2007, 57(1), 25-40.

Endings in group psychotherapy are suffused with complexity and potential conflict, some of which entail ethical quandaries. Ethical issues attending endings in group therapy are explored through a discussion of informed consent, time and role boundaries, privacy and confidentiality, unplanned endings, therapist-initiated termination, and competence. Findings from an exploratory survey of members of the American Group Psychotherapy Association and clinical-ethical vignettes are presented to highlight these issues. Clinicians need to develop and maintain ethical fitness and awareness, including attunement to personal responses, to endings and loss.

Klontz, B. T. (2004). Ethical Practice Of Group Experiential Psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 41 (2), 172–179.

Ethical issues related to the practice of group experiential therapy are discussed. Particular emphasis is given to ethical considerations associated with group psychotherapy versus individual psychotherapy, therapist competency in the use of experiential techniques, leader power issues, and aftercare. The “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” of the American Psychological Association (2002) and the “Association for Specialists in Group Work Best Practice Guidelines” (L. Rapin & L. Keel, 1998) are referenced to highlight ethical principles and guidelines as they relate to this discussion.

Shapiro, E. L. and Ginzberg, R. (2006). Buried treasure: money, ethics, and countertransference in group therapy. *International journal of group psychotherapy*, 56(4). 477 – 494.

Exploring money in the context of group therapy highlights the powerful way that groups can magnify the most intimate and charged aspects of our patients as well as ourselves. A thorough self-examination that

includes an ethical framework for decision-making about money matters can safeguard against problems resulting from therapists' and patients' unconscious relationship to money. This paper addresses the setting and raising of fees, pre-group evaluations, third-party payers, handling of payments and statements, as well as combined treatment. Special attention is paid to countertransference with an exploration of the particular difficulties inherent in reconciling one's identity as a healer with the business of clinical practice.

Brabender, V. M. and Fallon, A. (2009). Ethical hot spots of combined individual and group therapy: applying four ethical systems. *International journal of group psychotherapy*, 59(1), 127-147.

Combined therapy presents ethical quandaries that occur in individual psychotherapy and group psychotherapy, and dilemmas specifically associated with their integration. This paper examines two types of ethical frameworks (a classical principle-based framework and a set of context-based frameworks) for addressing the ethical hot spots of combined therapy: self-referral, transfer of information, and termination. The principle-based approach enables the practitioner to see what core values may be served or violated by different courses of action in combined therapy dilemmas. Yet, the therapist is more likely to do justice to the complexity and richness of the combined therapy situation by supplementing a principle analysis with three additional ethical frameworks. These approaches are: virtue ethics, feminist ethics, and casuistry. An analysis of three vignettes illustrates how these contrasting ethical models not only expand the range of features to which the therapist attends but also the array of solutions the therapist generates.

Pepper, R. (2007). Too close for comfort: the impact of dual relationships on group therapy and group therapy training. *International Journal Group Psychotherapy*, 57(1), 13-24.

The healing power of psychodynamically oriented therapy and training groups rests, to a large degree, upon the quality of the here and now interactions. For the work to be effective, the basic principles of analytic group work need to be followed, including the observance of no extra-group contact. Simply said, nothing leaves the room. This

principle has both ethical and clinical implications. It is my premise that while some forms of outside contact between members are relatively benign, other types are not. Outside contact that is built into the fabric and context of the group may pose a risk, as may be the case where dual relationships exist between members. The impact of dual relationships between group members in the particular instance of analytic training institutes is the focus of this article. What happens to the transference in this context when members reveal too much of their personal lives to each other through dual relationships is explored. It is suggested that extra-group contact can disrupt the balance between reality and transference distortion in group interactions in at least three ways: (a) “The Emperor’s New Clothes” effect, (b) looping, and (c) gaslighting. Vignettes are presented to illustrate these phenomena and suggestions for reform are offered.

Macnair-Semands, R. R. (2007). Commentary: Attending to the Spirit of Social Justice as an Ethical Approach in Group Therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 57(1), pp. 61 – 66.

Because small groups can mirror the biases and discrimination found in society, Debiak (this issue) encourages therapists to notice privilege dynamics, levels of cultural identity development, and member and leader worldviews which shape perceptions of interactions within the group setting. When appropriate, therapists can challenge group members to expand their perspectives to include consideration of culture; an overarching justice paradigm applied to group therapy can also increase leader sensitivity to nuances in the interactions of culturally diverse members.

Amato, L. (2000). Ethics. *American Journal of Art Therapy*, 39(1), p. 12.

Part of a special section on research on ethical practices in psychotherapy and art therapy. The writer discusses research dealing with ethical practices in group therapy and in record keeping. With regard to group therapy, she discusses research on ethical practices for group psychotherapists and art therapists, on ethical and legal issues in group psychotherapy, on how modalities of therapeutic treatment are related to ethical dilemmas, on ethical perspectives in family

caregiving, and on family therapy ethics. With regard to record keeping, the writer discusses research and literature outlining ethical guidelines for keeping records, the importance of proper record keeping by mental health professionals in order to document the delivery of competent services and to protect clients' confidentiality rights, and the need to adequately transfer records and protect their confidentiality.

Dalal, F. (2014). Ethics versus Compliance. The Institution, Ethical Psychotherapy Practice, (and Me). *Group Analysis*, March 2014; vol. 47, 1: pp. 62-81.

This article is a philosophical reflection on the proposed new codes of ethics and conduct. The article is an exploration of the question: given that codes of ethics consist of truisms (do good and be good), what is their function? It is argued that: the expectation in the domain of ethics ought to be one of disagreement, in contrast to that of agreement in the natural sciences; that codes of ethics are the opposite of negative liberty; that disciplinary processes avoid engaging with ethics by occupying themselves with compliance. This is followed by discussion as to how these and other themes play out in all institutions including the IGA. It is further argued that some elements of such codes are cult values (Mead). The tension between virtue ethics and deontological ethics is attended to.

Compiled by Terry Birchmore

BOOK CORNER

Book Review

Coetzee, J. M. and Arabella Kurtz, *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy*. Harvill Secker, London, 2015.

J. M. Coetzee is the contemporary of another South African émigré with a new book out, Morris Nitsun. *Beyond the Anti-Group* rethinks the relationship between individuals and groups, an issue that vexes Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz over many pages. “I have written of my interest in what we are loosely calling group psychology,” the novelist admits, “but I continue to struggle to say anything constructive about it. I have looked at Bion’s *Experiences in Groups*, but got nothing from it” (p. 143). Gustave Le Bon, the Afrikaner polymath Eugène Marais and Isabel Menzies Lyth are also discussed, but there is no mention of S. H. Foulkes or other group-analytic theorists. It is a pity because concepts such as the matrix or the anti-group would have helped Coetzee and Kurtz a great deal.

The omission probably stems from the rift between the school of Bion at the Tavistock Centre and that of Foulkes at the Institute of Group Analysis. Foulkes supported Anna Freud during the British psychoanalytic ructions of 1942–44, while Bion was a disciple of her adversary Melanie Klein. The Tavistock became a Kleinian stronghold and the institutional influence upon Kurtz is obvious to me. Apart from passing references to Sigmund Freud and D. W. Winnicott, all the psychoanalysts Kurtz names are Tavistock Kleinians or fellow travellers: Anne Alvarez, Bion, Ronald Britton, Paula Heimann, Menzies Lyth, Hanna Segal and Neville Symington. Kurtz, however, never reflects on her angle. On the contrary, the socially deferential version of psychoanalysis she has learnt – “we actively, if unconsciously, invite others to know something about us that we do not know about ourselves” (p. 140) – is presented as “the psychoanalytic theory of human relations” (p. 137), as though there is only one. Theories that count the cost of social compliance and therapies that help people to break its grip certainly don’t get cited. When Kurtz writes of education that “I have an image ... of pupils ... as blinkered horses” (p. 158), it seems to be without awareness that her image

relates also to sectarian psychoanalysis. Institutionalisation – blinkering, conformism – is this book's blind spot.

When Coetzee criticises nationalism, Kurtz comes to its defence. She loyally regards her own professional realm as a paragon of human achievement: "The collective endeavour I had in mind [to praise] was not a cathedral or a pyramid, but socialised medicine in the form of the NHS" (p. 123). And she responds like an ethical watchdog to Coetzee's comparison between pedagogy and therapy: "it isn't right to interpret transference reactions without explicit permission to do so" (p. 171). He replies: "You are very strict, very professional (in the sense of guarding the integrity of the profession), in your condemnation of the teacher who practises amateur psychotherapy in the classroom" (pp. 179–80). It is fair comment but doesn't go far enough. Kurtz is too strict with the rulebook. It isn't always applied in forensic psychotherapy, for instance, as her own research on attitudes in a secure hospital found: public-safety and medical agendas clashed, and staff had concerns that the coercive environment was unsuitable for therapy (Kurtz and Turner, 2007). The authority of Kurtz's psychoanalytic position is overstated, but non-specialist readers of *The Good Story* won't realise because Coetzee doesn't question it.

The authors are strangely preoccupied with criminals and delinquents. Coetzee worries at first that psychotherapeutic unearthing of the past jeopardises fanciful but comforting life stories. But then he ponders torturers who don't feel guilt, imagines a three-year-old who secretly kills a sibling, disapproves of the smug villain of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* and finally claims that many prisoners pretend to accept sentences that they privately regard to be unjust. Kurtz adds solemnly that "the patient-offender" needs a "robust therapeutic response" in order to feel "real remorse" (p. 48). These initial exchanges veer towards scapegoating, and it is only when Coetzee starts discussing the shadiness of *law-abiding* people – specifically descendants of white settlers who wash their hands of colonial genocides – that the book exits a moralistic cul-de-sac.

Coetzee was a university professor for decades and some of the book's most interesting passages deal with teaching. Unlike Kurtz, he isn't an enthusiast for his profession. He is bothered by the makeup of his classes: "The ones who have made it to the tertiary level are the sober ones, the ones who accept authority easily, who have not found

it hard to adapt to the system. The naughty ones are elsewhere, creating a different kind of life for themselves” (p. 164). And, with a repetition that becomes melancholy, he keeps wanting to discuss gangs: “The antithesis of the school class, the group constituted from above by the rational criteria of age, scholastic ability, and so forth, is the gang, the group that constitutes itself, from within, on grounds that are hard for the outsider to penetrate” (p. 123). The difficulty doesn’t deter him: four more times he comes back to gangs, commenting on childhood friendships, the instinct to have enemies, the plight of surplus young males and the awkward situation of loners. The earlier move from criminal to citizen is retraced, minus the scapegoating and with curiosity about precarious ways of life that dispense with both rulebooks and textbooks. A semi-fictional image gradually emerges from Coetzee’s contributions to *The Good Story* of an apathetic professional, an unhappy academic whose mind can’t stop drifting out of the lecture hall he nevertheless returns to year after year. This picture fits the characterisation of “John Coetzee” in the novel *Summertime*: “He was a misfit. He was also a cautious soul. He liked the security of a monthly salary cheque” (Coetzee, 2009). Caution and endless compromise destroy morale eventually. Accepting disillusionment instead of attempting independence may be even more soul-destroying than being devoted to an institution. It makes life an alibi, a good story that conceals hopelessness.

R. D. Laing, a Tavistock renegade, wrote more about groups than most psychoanalysts. He wished to assist getaways: “If the [social] formation is itself off course, then the man who is really to get ‘on course’ must leave the formation. But it is possible to do so, if one desires, without screeches and screams, and without terrorizing the already terrified formation that one has to leave” (Laing, 1967, p. 99, italics suppressed). The idea of escape from an oppressive society is taken to the limit in Coetzee’s novel *The Life and Times of Michael K*. The quiet, mysterious protagonist is interned in a labour camp. Another inmate warns that if he is caught trying to abscond he will be sent to a more brutal camp. Still Michael takes the risk and finds eerie freedom in the wilderness: “Now surely I have come as far as a man can come ... surely now that in all the world only I know where I am, I can think of myself as lost” (Coetzee, 1983). Nadine Gordimer, who like Coetzee would later win the Nobel Prize for Literature, objected to this portrayal: Michael should have fought the tyrannical system

from within (Gordimer, 1984). Yet in an ordinary stifled life quitting is a more serious act than subversion, which often peters out into apathy. “Courage consists,” the philosopher Maurice Blanchot once said, “in agreeing to flee rather than live tranquilly and hypocritically in false refuges” (Blanchot, quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 341). Coetzee has written powerfully in fiction about this bravery, yet the idea of escape is all but forgotten in *The Good Story*. It only comes through indirectly, in the poignant and fragmentary references to gangs.

Some people have fulfilling and prosperous careers. Many more experience work and other conditions of life as imprisoning. There may be, or seem to be, no way out. Despair sets in. Sad to say, sometimes therapy makes matters worse. Morris Nitsun remembers dropping out of a sensitivity group in his student days: “I left because I felt I could hardly survive in the group, the splitting and hostility was so intense, and I felt so lost and threatened” (Nitsun, 2015, p. 147). *The Good Story* reminded me how important it is to keep the *politics* of psychotherapy in view. For example, what about Nitsun’s description of worthwhile group-analytic therapy: “the group functions as a *refuge* – a refuge from the madness of the outside world and a refuge from ... inner distress” (p. 132)? Perhaps I romanticise escape or underestimate what it entails. Economic and psychosocial constraints are formidable. These days there is the digital institution of social networking to reckon with too. Nevertheless, recalling Blanchot’s remark, I wonder whether the refuge as a metaphor for therapy gives up on what Coetzee in his dejected way calls “a different kind of life”, whether it is another admission of defeat.

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Rob White

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 GASI office if you would like to donate any original or copied documents:

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Events

GAS International Quarterly Members Group (QMG)

The dates for sessions in 2016:

Saturday 23rd January

Saturday 23rd April

Saturday 9th July

Saturday 22th October

Format: there are three 90-minute sessions with a 90-minute break for lunch; the day runs from 9.30am - 4.30pm with the first group starting at 10.00.

Conductor: Ian Simpson.

Venue: Guild of Psychotherapists
47 Nelson Square, London SE1

The venue is a three minute walk from Southwark Underground Station. In addition to the large group room, we have the use of a kitchen. Morning refreshments are provided. For lunch, the Guild is in an area where there are many good, inexpensive places to eat.

The fee for the group is £25 per day or £80 for the year.

You can pay on the day by cash or cheque
or in advance at the GASI office:

1 Daleham Gardens, London, NW3 5BY
+44 20 7435 6611

All GASI members are welcome to the QMG.



40th S.H. FOULKES ANNUAL LECTURE

Friday 13th May 2016 at 7:00pm

***Impossible Groups That Flourish in Leaking
Containers –
Challenging Group Analytic Theory***

Speaker: Haim Weinberg

Respondent: Gerda Winther

Please note that the Lecture is at 7-8.30pm. Party afterwards until 10pm to celebrate 40years and the 40th Foulkes Lecture.

Study Day to follow on Saturday May 14th 2016

Respondents: Carla Penna and Marina Mojović

Large Group Conductor: Earl Hopper

Venue:

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS,

11 St Andrews Place

Regent's Park

LONDON NW1 4LE

(nearest tube stations: Regent's Park and Great Portland Street)

Full programme to follow

The GASI and IGA UK are pleased to announce:

Dr Xu Yong's Presentation:

*The Development of Psychodynamic Group
Psychotherapy in China - Does it fit with
Chinese Culture?*

**Respondent: Earl Hopper
Chair: Sue Einhorn**

**Friday 19th February 2016
18:00 – 21:00**

**Venue: Institute of Group Analysis
1 Daleham Gardens, London NW3**

Cost: £10 at the door.

No pre-payment

GAGA: drawn by Isabel Cercos, idea by Peter Zelaskowski



CONTEXTS' COLUMNIST

MY WORLD – YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT

Hey, man, dig the intertextuality

Ready, Get SETI

Stephen Hawking seems to have changed his mind about the danger of contacting alien life forms, or at least about knowing if they are there, and is endorsing the project of a Russian billionaire who is spending \$100 million on a *Breakthrough Listen* project to look for signs of life in our galaxy. (SH is less keen on sending messages but I refer you to the MWYWTI column of June 2015 for a comment on this).

There must be better ways of spending that much money because surely the whole exercise is futile. Let's say the project lasts a thousand years. There are estimated to be billions of earth like planets in the Milky Way within the habitable zone of stars. The nearest candidates that have been spotted are 1290, 1200 and 490 light years away. The galaxy is 150,000 light years across (approx.). If another planet's evolutionary time line happened to be completely co-ordinated with our own (we've only been broadcasting in the last 100 years) then we wouldn't be getting signals from these for some time and only one within the 1000 year project period. However this sort of co-ordination is unlikely, other civilisations may have come and gone and any signals already passed us. There are planets much further away which may have gone through their self-conscious life cycle and it's either gone, or it's yet to come in others where consciousness (not to say the sort of advanced technology necessary) may not arise for thousands, millions or billions of years. Let's face it, we're never gonna hear from our neighbours and the same applies to purposefully, or accidentally, contacting them. Scientists must know this, so why aren't they telling the billionaire? 100,000,000 reasons!

But as to the question of there being at some point in the history of the universe other intelligences? Well, you can take the view that we are completely exceptional in the scheme of things or else are a typical example of life coming forth when the opportunity arises. MWYWTI likes to take the latter view but you pay your millions and you make your choice.

Every(training)body Must Get Stoned

Lavinia Palace and Doc's session

LP: Do you know what the training scheme is for the IGA now.

Doc: I'm afraid I only vaguely keep up, why?

LP: The way it's structured currently, trainees do their second group first rather than doing it following their two year training group.

Doc: I'm sorry Lavinia, maybe it's me, but you don't seem to be making any sense. This isn't like "the first shall be last etc." a sort of spiritual cliché?

LP: No, no, no. Students used to run their training therapy group for two years and then run a second group that could be an adaptation or application of GA for a year. But now there's a Diploma course where students only have to sign up for a year and if they want "practitioner status" they run this other sort of group. Then if they go on to the qualifying course they run a two year analytic style group. And why have they done, it because it doesn't make educational sense to work with an adaptation of something before you've learned to do that something first? I suspect it's not for educational reasons but commercial ones, it makes it a more attractive option to put things in this order because far more people are going to want to do the Diploma than go on to do the qualifying course.

Doc: So you think that the IGA should make its courses as unattractive as possible? And really it's only a "second group first", according to you, because of the tradition the IGA set itself on the first place, perhaps they're just trying to keep up to date?

LP: What about standards?

Doc: What was your second group Lavinia?

LP: Oh, when I trained we didn't do a second group, just the one.

Doc: As it happens it was the same for me and in my day the course ran for two years and a term but don't let's mention either of these things outside this room otherwise they'll think we aren't sufficiently trained.

Can I get this straight – you seem to be implying that it's better not to run a second group at all, as you didn't, than run a variation of group analysis before running a "traditional" group analytic group?

LP: I thought I was pointing out an educational contradiction.

Doc: Perhaps a bit in the abstract. I tell you what, to test this out, the next time you're at a GASI event, pick out the current or recent group of students who've followed this new schema and ask them what they've made of it, whether they've found it helpful, educational, enlightening, useful or confusing.

LP: Can't I just rant without being asked to think or research?

Doc: No.

Like A Woman

Surely MWYWTI can't be alone in thinking that Bob Dylan's *Just Like A Woman* isn't about a woman at all but a transvestite/ transgender woman? He was hanging out at Warhol's factory at the time and would have had contact with many. This would make it a rather less vicious piece than if it is really directed at a woman, especially if, as rumoured, it was Edie Sedgwick whom he had a relationship with (not that he can't be vicious towards women, just listen to *Like a Rolling Stone*). It would explain some of the artificiality of the language and references. It is a strangely popular song given its misogyny (if it is about a woman, she seems to have been taken for granted) and the "but" of the chorus really is a solecism. If presented in class it surely would have been sent back with a "must do better" note.

Doc & L's Reprise

LP: Have you seen this item in the *Contexts* column about a Bob Dylan song? What is it doing there, what has this got to do with Group Analysis?

Doc: You might have a point but I also keep wondering why you keep going on about the IGA training when you didn't train there yourself. Perhaps you unconsciously agree that it is the "premier UK institution for training in group psychotherapy".

LP: The only.

Doc: But I accept that this is what you want to talk about and hope that in the fullness of time the meaning will come forth. But personally I think that if group analysis is group analysis then there's certainly time for a group to spend 20 minutes or so discussing the semiotics of Lady Gaga or even if they just like her music? Or even analyse *Just Like A Woman* – that Bob, ahead of his time.

LP: Doc, tell me it isn't so?

Travelling Man

Freud, by all accounts, was a rather anxious traveller who liked to arrive at a station three hours before his train was due to leave. In this respect he seems to have been a man ahead of his time as this sort of scheduling would have put him right in line with the international airport travel expectations of today.

“Our prime purpose in life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.”

The Dalai Lama

I ain't a-haulin' any of my lambs to the market place any more.
