



**ISRAELI INSTITUTE
OF GROUP ANALYSIS**
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Intouchable

Spring Workshop

7-9 March
Kibbutz Gonen
Israel

Dr. Robi Friedman & Marit Joffe-Milstein
Co-chairs of the workshop

INtouchABLE - 2nd Internationa Spring Workshop in Gonen, 2013

Dear colleagues and friends,

We welcome you to the 2nd Spring Workshop of the Israel Institute for Group Analysis. The wonderful season, the Upper Galilee and kibbutz Gonen will join in with the Workshop's participants to enjoy the rich program and the facilities. We are all united by our interest in Groups. We relate by the fascination of conducting therapy in a group-analytic way: making space for the group's interaction and humbly taking a significant place in the interpersonal dynamic. The Small Groups, the Large Groups and the lectures are all part of a setting designed to facilitate your development and the satisfaction of your curiosity and the passion for groups. The possibility to tour the area's special sites may further contribute to enjoy these days – the opportunity to visit the space where most birds migrate in large groups between South and North may be a unique experience.

You are invited to join in an effort to reflect and experience being INtouch. Let's look at how we are ABLE to participate and let's make a space for an analytic inquiry into these unique relation processes between the individual and the group,

Looking forward to greeting you

Ms. Marit Joffe Milstein & Dr. Robi Friedman (co-Chairs of the Workshop)

Dr. Enav Karniel Lauer & Dr. Avi Berman (co-Chairs of the Scientific Committee)

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Plenary Lectures:
Thursday 7.3.2013 - 10:00-12:00
Plenary Chair: Dr. Robi Friedman
Presenters:
Ms. Hanni Biran
Dr. Thomas Bolm

To investigate the “*intouchable*”, it behooves us take a closer look at what is “touchable” in an Analytic Therapy group.

Ms. Hanni Biran

What is meant by “emotional touch”? We are not going to look at physical contact but with emotional contact that occurs between people, among the inner worlds of members of an analytic group. In down-to-earth language, we are looking at heart-to-heart contact. The heart expands when it comes into contact with the heart of an Other. Emotional contact occurs amongst group members and between them and the group conductor.

Derrida, writing from a philosophic framework, defines tact : Touch without contact. He sees this kind of tact as one which ignites our imagination and our fantasy life. He speaks of a meeting point of gazes, a moment of eye-to-eye contact. The ability of two people to look into each other’s eyes at the same time enables a crossing of boundaries but paradoxically at the same time preserves a proper distance. According to him, this kind of touching bumps up against a boundary. There will always be part of the Other that remains impenetrable what he calls “a respectful distance”.

Bion defines this kind of touch as “Caesura”. He is certain that the *caesura* is the most important and sensitive place in which emotional contact between two people takes place. It is here that the boundary between them is clarified. That is, the notion of *caesura* has a double, paradoxical meaning, both a separation and a joining simultaneously. Towards the end of his life Bion speculated that this is the most important area to investigate in order to understand inter and intra psychic processes. This is the conclusion he draws at the end of his article, “Caesura”:

Investigate the caesura; not the analyst; not the analysand; not the unconscious; not the conscious; not sanity; not insanity. But the caesura, the link, the synapse, the transitive-intransitive mood”

Derrara's definition is parallel to that of Bion. The two agree that the moment of this touching contains mysterious elements that are hard to define. Both attribute to this kind of touch a point of contact with the world beyond, an exalted and transcendental world, one with no end. It is also a reminder of death and transcendence. Touch implies impermanence, a coming and going. It also involves touching the boundary of the Other, which can arouse desire for more contact and hope to be loved.

It takes a certain skill to create this kind of contact. Implied here is the potential for power and expansion. Speech comes after eye contact. Now there is more contact, but through language. In the Analytic Therapy group speech is the main channel of communication. This is how members communicate their desire, their fantasies and even the magic of being able to touch the Other's inner world.

In order, however, for the "magic touch" to occur between two people, there is a prior condition that must be met, namely, the ability to be in contact with one's Self. If there is a gap between some aspects of a person and other parts of his Self, it is reasonable to assume that in a group, he/she will feel cut off or threatened when these parts appear in the reports and stories of other members.

Case Study

I will now describe a meeting of my Analytic Group that took place on 2.9.12. It was the first gathering after a long Summer vacation. At first there seemed to be little emotional contact among group members. This became more clear in retrospect after an outburst that took place in the second part of the meeting.

Of the 9 members, 2 were absent from the meeting, one because she was near the end of her pregnancy and approaching birth, the other because of a trip abroad. A third member was late by about 10 minutes. In the group there are 3 men and 6 women .

At the beginning, discussion was quite shallow. Some members said they were happy to be back and that they had been waiting for the group to start up again. No one brought up anything particularly emotional or significant. One member said he felt like a pupil again, on the first day of school, when everyone tells what he or she did over the Summer. Another said he felt bored, like at a slide show evening. The atmosphere was flat, and there was little emotional expression.

The member who arrived late had been in the group for 3 months. She is a lesbian. I'll call her Ayia. She is a good looking woman, dark skinned with an Eastern, oriental look. She is the adopted daughter of reserved and self controlled parents from German origin . She describes her parents as generous but people who gave her a strict upbringing, which made her up-tight and always careful to use proper language. She spoke in a quiet tone and had a rather tight and careful look about her. After some point in the session she said that the superficial atmosphere in the group was, unfortunately, very familiar to her. It simply reflected real life outside the group, in which people are alienated from one another, each in his own world. There is no authentic conversation. That's the way it is. She supposed there is no reason for things to be otherwise in the group.

She went on to tell how she would get excited and keyed up from articles written by a certain journalist (a woman). She waits the whole week to read her articles. This particular journalist speaks the truth and says what she has to say in a totally straight-forward way. The journalist really voices Ayia herself. In addition, she watches a TV series "Mehubarim", a reality program about men. There she discovered that men are in fact able to speak about their emotions. She was always so certain that men are boring robots. Then she told the group about a moment she had had in the group three months prior, on the day she had joined the group. A member, David, had talked about himself in very emotional way. It had been a very strong and unexpected experience for her. But even so, she would be happy if there weren't men in the group. When she concluded, she said that again, as on every Thursday, she was excited waiting for the article written by the journalist she liked so much. Thursday is a day she loves the most. (I should point out that our group meets on Monday nights)

At this point, I said that there seemed to be an atmosphere of alienation in the group and that people were not really touching each other. I also pointed out that the men were not reacting to what had been said. And finally, I thought but did not say that the truly desired object appears on Thursday not Monday. It seemed to me that Ayia was expressing a thought for the whole group, namely, that at that particular moment they didn't feel the group was very desirable. However, for some reason I couldn't say this thought out loud. I felt some anxiety because of the flat atmosphere and fear that if I would say that the group appeared not desirable, I would destroy any hope for contact.

There were some moments of silence. People moved restlessly in their chairs. Following the silence, Avraham, the oldest member, began to tell in great detail about a trip abroad he had taken in August with his eldest grandson. He talked about his difficulty in getting close to his grandson, who had been very quiet during their whole trip. He told how he was very preoccupied with what his grandson thought of him, how he wants to invite the boy for a talk and ask him what he had learned on the trip about the kind of grandfather he had.

Avraham is an educated man of Eastern, Oriental origin, divorced, who for a long time has been doing a kind of self examination, in which he has concluded that in his youth he was a rigid, distanced, and aggressive father. He lacked all emotional closeness to his children and had even been a kind of dictator with a heart of stone. Two of his children cut off connections with him. Every time he thinks about this, he feels he's missed out on something, becomes regretful and begins to cry. He experiences an intense, overwhelming pain. Now, however, he didn't touch his pain but focused mainly on the fact that through his grandson he is trying to repair for the fatherhood he missed out on.

People reacted with an empathy that had a false ring to it. It seemed to be covering over a lack of interest and a kind of emotional shut-down. Members tried to support him, compliment him on the trip he took with his grandson. But for some reason there seemed to be no real contact among people.

It seemed that until now nothing genuine had happened. There was a sense of things being underneath the surface that we weren't getting at. I felt a kind of quiet before the storm, and I was more and more tense. I tried to say something about the long vacation that had interfered with the work of the group, but no one picked up from there.

Suddenly there was an unexpected change. Ayia turned to Avraham and told him he was boring her. He was taking valuable time in the group to tell his long story. He was only concerned with himself. The only thing that interested him was what his grandson thinks of him. He was just going on and on and whining like a slut. The word "slut" was a surprise. (the word in Hebrew is *cusit*) The way she used it was street slang and not part of the group vocabulary. The word itself is one that men use when talking about a woman they see as a sexual object. It is also a word that in Hebrew, "*cusit*", is a play on words for "vagina". It is insulting when said by a man. What she might have been trying to do by using the word herself was to attract attention, behaving like a seductive woman, and she was furious that he was preoccupied with himself and waiting for compliments from the group.

The talk went on and no one related to the word “slut” that had been said in the room. Avraham didn’t react either and continued to behave as if it hadn’t bothered him, that it had nothing to do with him. The group’s avoidance of responding to the word seemed to me significant, and so I repeated it and asked Ayia what she had wanted to say exactly by using that word. She said that she didn’t know. It had just slipped out. Then Avraham turned to her and said in a patronizing tone, with barely disguised anger, “How you use words without realizing what you are saying!” I tried to show Avraham that though he hadn’t overtly reacted to her attack, he was then trying to educate her. This was his way of expressing his anger.

I told Ayia that Avraham was taking the role of the father whose sons have left him. And she was taking the role of the daughter whose biological parents abandoned her. Perhaps she was angry at Avraham because he is from an Eastern, Oriental background just as she is. She might also be angry because for her he has taken on the role of the father that abandoned her. She was quick to respond that he does not have the role of her biological father because when she opened her adoption file, she discovered that her biological father didn’t even know of her existence. Nonetheless, she continued, it was important for her to point out that Avraham represents the kind of Eastern, Oriental man she can’t stand. All the negative characteristics she sees in kinds of men, she sees in him, a kind of combination of an Eastern man and a slut.

Avraham continued sitting quietly and didn’t respond. To my question regarding how he felt, he answered that he didn’t care what Ayia thinks. For him, she was invisible and had been for the last three months, from the moment that she entered the group. He feels disdain for all lesbians and homosexuals. They are people with whom he wouldn’t sit in the same room. He is absolutely repulsed by them. Ayia was shocked and said she had never been so insulted in her life. She demanded I throw Avraham out of the group.

One of the members began to shout at Avraham and ask him how dare he speak like that. Others also expressed anger. He responded by saying that he wouldn’t change, that’s the way he is. He hates lesbians and homosexuals. I told him that the way he spoke shows that he’d been hurt by Ayia and that perhaps she touches some of his own fears that his son who lives abroad might be a homosexual. Perhaps he doesn’t return to Israel and try to again connect with his father is because of the father’s prejudice. To my surprise, Avraham said that there was something to what I said, that relatives had hinted as much. He said that if it turns out that his son is gay, he would accept him despite his great hatred for gays and lesbians.

The group was very upset. Everyone shouted together, mostly at Avraham. Only one female member said that if he felt this way, it was his right to express himself. This member pointed out that Ayia's using the expression "an Eastern, Oriental man" and "slut" was not less insulting than what Avraham had said to Ayia.

But, the group was mostly angry at Avraham and showed much empathy towards Ayia. She declared that this was the first time in her life that she had heard things like that. If I don't tell Avraham to leave the group, she would leave.

I tried to summarize and said that we had entered an area that was very difficult to touch, that of racial and gender prejudice. When this topic is spoken about, it usually leads to an explosion. This is what happened when Avraham expressed prejudice towards gays and lesbians and Ayia, towards Eastern, Oriental people. She is denying her own biological background, and she sees in him something negative. He is denying unfinished business within himself regarding homosexuality. Each one of them had touched prejudice in its rawest form. And we had actually seen that there was no calm way of dealing with it. There was just an explosion. People responded by all shouting together. It was impossible to think. It was an attack on thinking. The feeling was that after the superficial silence of the first part of the meeting, dynamite had been brought into the group. There would be no chance that Ayia and Avraham could be together in the same group.

That night, after the meeting, I thought that Avraham and Ayia had been "holding" prejudice for the whole group, and that it is difficult to treat this component because it is so difficult to acknowledge. The moment it is touched, there's an explosion. Like dynamite thrown into the air. These topics are usually denied but when they do surface, there is no touching them, just an explosion.

That very evening I got an SMS from Ayia in which she wrote me that she had decided definitely to leave the group. She wrote that she was doing so because I hadn't protected her and hadn't thrown Avraham out of the group. Neither would she come to say goodbye and would send me payment by mail for that evening's meeting. Her announcement depressed me and made me quite anxious and doubtful about my ability to contain all the group members in the middle of such a difficult conflict.

During the week, I found myself telephoning and sending e-mails to three group members, something I'd never done before. My rationalizations had to do with various technical matters,

but the truth is I wanted to tell them about Ayia's sudden departure. Happily, each of them read my thoughts and contacted her to request that she not leave the group. I rationalized to myself that the illegal action I had taken was more than justified by the therapeutic capacity of group members. I had just given them a little push in this direction. The result would be beneficial to them as well as to Ayia.. Ayia in fact was very moved by what they had done and decided not to leave the group.

In the next meeting, Ayia told everyone that she had noticed that from the moment she entered the group, and during the subsequent three months, Avraham had ignored whatever she said. He never addressed her and related to her as if she were invisible.

The following months in the group were very stormy. People were hurtful to each other and also were hurt. . There were no expressions of interest about a new baby that had been born to one of the members, and no one related to the death of the mother of another. However, slowly and gradually people took responsibility for the evil within themselves. This seemed to facilitate a growing closeness between Avraham and Ayia and between other "pairs" that had hurt each other.

After-Thoughts

From this process one can learn about certain aspects of group life that are difficult for members to come in contact with. However, it is apparently necessary for them to do so in order for true touch to take place:

1. Acknowledgement of the evil inherent in prejudice and racism. It is very difficult to take responsibility for these traits within us but their violent appearance in the group room paradoxically brought about greater closeness and contact that wasn't possible beforehand.
2. Acknowledgement of parts of myself which I projected on to a member of the group. For example, only towards the end of January, 2013 did I begin to realize that Ayia really wanted to be a slut that begs, seduces, and doesn't protect herself so well. She wasn't in contact with that part of herself.
3. Denial of the life cycle. Difficulty in seeing and acknowledging the birth and death that had occurred in the lives of the members was because of the difficulty and fear of touching changes in their lives and changes in the group.

Coming in touch with the untouchable in myself requires acknowledging the badness in myself and sometimes even evil.. Denying this is dangerous and prevents change. Only by touching these aspects can we undergo a transformation which in turn can help turn malignancy into generosity. Contact with the evil within me is necessary for change. It is not easy to make deep, inner connections like this in an analytic group.

The GA position is a soft, humanistic one that emphasizes empathy as a curative element. However, one must remember that Freud speaks of the Death Instinct as well as the Life Instinct. Melanie Klein sees aggression as a positive element in emotional development, and Bion is certain that destruction and hatred are inherent within us and in therapy. It is possible to convert these feelings into something constructive and beneficial.

Kristeva , in her book, “The Power of the Terrifying”, deals with Abjection. Abjection is despicable, violent behavior that doesn’t recognize limits, norms and laws. In the group event I described, transgressing acceptable language was a transgression of unwritten law. The word “slut” went beyond acceptable language in the group. Also, humiliating a group member about a quality that is central to his or her self-definition, such as “Eastern, Oriental man” or “lesbian” only created alienation and prevented inter subjective contact .

The dynamics around this event were surprising and similar to Bion’s notion of “the catastrophic change”. The dynamics that he describes are like those described by Kristeva, that is, the larger the hurt inflicted by ridiculing or dismissing someone, the greater the need to re-emphasize law and order.

When there is an Abjection, accompanied by contempt and rejection, there is strong need for law and order until stated and unstated rules are once again followed. Being cast out is connected to questions of boundaries. The outcast phenomenon challenges the existence of boundaries but also brings about unity. Paradoxically he/she also guards the limits of the group culture. He/she clarifies just what are the group boundaries. The moment the word “slut” is used, not only are the boundaries of language challenged but the boundaries between men and women are as well. Calling a man a “slut” is to cancel out his manhood. It also mixes up the sexual identities. Paradoxically, bringing a tone of scorn to the room brought an end to alienation. The ensuing explosion brought chaos and creativity, which opened the door to the start of contact. “Slut” is a word that sprung from the unconsciousness, because one can imagine that Ayia carries within her the baby that was scorned and abandoned by her mother. According to both Kristeva and Bion

the rehabilitation that follows hurt restores authentic contact. In my group, real contact could only begin after the group could contain the expression of raw aggression.

The word “slut”, though denigrating, led at the end to the creation of real contact, whereas the more clear categories “lesbian”, “Eastern, Oriental man” only led to distancing and alienation.

The anthropologist Marie Douglas deals with the topics of defilement and contamination. According to her, these phenomena lead to rejection and feelings of danger because they violate the sense of order and threaten social and cultural organization, and this arouses a sense of danger. Thus, the one who violates is removed from his/her position and considered contaminated.

Douglas shows that in the many oppositional pairs found in society there is an inherent hierarchy. Therefore, one should not see the oppositional forces within them as horizontal but rather, vertical. For example, the pair East/West or man/woman are not on the same level with regards to the division of social and political power. The East is an inferior political category than the West just as the woman is with regards to man. In Judaism, the definition of the woman as impure during her monthly period stands in opposition to man, who is not impure. So, these expressions, which are related to ethnic background or to gender, are not innocent and their covert purpose is to humiliate and devalue.

Susan Zontag speaks of our exposure to war photos which we see regularly on TV, Internet and in the newspapers. We see pictures of destruction and devastation, corpses, torn limbs and collapsed buildings, and all this does not stir us to action. We, the educated class, are not monsters, but we have failed in the sense that we lack imagination, empathy and the capacity to contain this awful reality in our thinking. We, who deal in Group Analysis, have a hard time acknowledging the fact that empathy is limited and the ability to imagine the suffering of the Other is also limited. In the group we convert alienation, distancing and emotional coolness into human warmth and contact. But there will always remain areas that are frozen and untouchable.

Another aspect of being human, a worse one, is looking into people who are rejected because of our uncontrolled attraction to cruelty. This is the pornographic aspect of looking. The emotion that causes drivers to slow down when they drive by an accident is not just curiosity. For many people, it is also the desire to see something shocking. This attraction is not rare and there comes

with it a degree of relief, that the person suffering is someone that was driving in my lane and what happened to him did not happen to me.

Zontag suggests that such phenomena are an inborn desire to be cruel. People like to look at pictures of suffering. People draw pleasure from the pain of others. According to this point of view, which is beyond the ken of Group Analysis, we learn that liking cruelty is natural to human beings no less than empathy. This is the opposite pole from empathy.

In her book “Looking at Other’s Suffering” Zontag reaches a conclusion that is relevant to our work as group analysts. She speaks of the fact that we must be aware of the scope of suffering that results from human evil. A person who is regularly surprised at the evil and corruption in the world has not reached moral and psychological maturity. Each person reaches an age at which he/she loses their right to be innocent, shallow and ignorant. Clearly Ayia who says that “she has never heard anyone talk about lesbians and homosexuals as she did in the group” has chosen a stance of innocence which ignores the reality in which she is living.

On a deeper level, that of the group unconscious, ignoring the birth and death that happened during the life of the group is actually ignoring life. The difficulty in touching the subject of death is sharply described in the book “Spirit” by Michal Ben Naftali. Ben Naftali describes the figure of her grandmother, who, when she was young left her family in Eastern Europe and immigrated to Palestine to begin a new life. Her mother and brothers died in the Holocaust while she was living in Tel Aviv. She married and raised a family and didn’t know that they had died and how they died. News of them arrived only much later.

Her guilt and shock were so severe that she couldn’t mourn. “ It didn’t occur to anyone that the wall she built to protect herself from death was also a wall against life. The silence of death was everywhere, lurking in her speech like an abyss, an impassable barrier against which words continued to return and become stuck.”. The grandmother is described as a figure that lived an entire lifetime, empty and monotone. It was a life of survival, without happiness or zest. Her inability to touch the terrible death of her family led to her own spiritual death, to a frozen emotional state that life could not penetrate. Since she couldn’t be in real touch with herself and couldn’t reduce her pain, she couldn’t tolerate real contact with her children and grandchildren and the life around her.

The inability to deal with death was also wordlessly present in the group. While one of the members was in mourning, the group acted like the figure of the alienated grandmother in the

book “Spirit”. Some weeks had passed like this until a dramatic event occurred. The member whose mother had died brought her grief out into the open and told of her great disappointment with the members, who had totally ignored her. This confession that directly expressed the insult she felt enabled a group transformation from indifference to generosity. The member finally came into contact with her own feelings when she stopped denying her pain. Contact with herself led to contact with group members, who were finally able, for the first time, to feel her grief. From then on there was a new warmth in the group.

In summary, the areas that are hardest to touch are those areas of human evil, aggression, racism and prejudice. These are areas which hide from our awareness, and therefore it is hard to take responsibility for them. . From the most difficult group events we learn about the unconscious. At first these painful areas appear in the form of acting out, in the desire to throw someone out of the group, in hatred and massive projections that members put on each other. As the process continues, however, a dialogue is created and the emotional dynamite is transformed owing to the group container. Also we learn that empathy and compassion are more authentic and significant after conflict and hurtfulness. The group that succeeds in dealing with evil within it will become able to reach a heightened degree of empathy. We also learn that on the level of the group unconscious, it is difficult to acknowledge temporariness, change and death. The price of ignoring these is that vital life, too, is missed.

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Minding the Mind – Staying in Touch!

Mentalizing within Borderline Group Therapy

Presentation at The INtouchABLE, Spring Conference IIGA 2013, Kibbutz Gonen

Thomas Bolm, Germany

MENTALIZING

Definition: Implicitly and explicitly interpreting behaviour of oneself and others in a meaningful context with inner (mental) states

Mental states: i.e. intentions, needs, wishes, affects, reasons, etc.

Metacognition / metarepresentation:

- Experience and behaviour depend on context
- (Social) situation here and now
- Subjective perspective
- Individual history
- Individual patterns

Mentalizing: Use of representation for (inter-) subjectivity, error, pretence, plurality, playing with reality, meaning and symbols, related to ego-functions like integration, differentiation, modulation, regulation

High level of mentalizing: Reflecting (intentional) mode of interpreting reality:
complex mentalizing, „playing with reality“

Precursors:

- **Equivalence mode:** No different concepts of meaning of inner and outer reality (no mentalizing!)
- **Teleological mode:** Only the result of a behaviour tells the truth about the intention
- **As-if (pretend) mode:** no link between feelings, thoughts, body and outer reality

Development of the Capacity to Mentalize:

Cognitive-emotional development depends on experience

- External reality secure (incl. primary caregiver)
- Quality of primary relationships:
 - Attachment patterns not disorganized
 - Affect attunement, mentalizing, containing
 - Mirroring contingent and marked

Mentalizing can be difficult

- in an attachment relationship („If someone becomes very important to me“)
 - associated by intensive emotions, esp. anxiety
 - with relevant biographic background of man-made trauma or neglect, esp. done by relevant caregivers
-

In Touch with the Borderline

Borderline Biographies: Physical abuse (50-80%), Sexual abuse (70-100%), Serious neglect (40-50%), Adult Attachment Interview: 75 – 100% “insecure-preoccupied“, out of these 83 - 88% “trauma unresolved“

The resulting great BPD-challenge: A necessary therapeutic attachment relationship („My therapist becomes very important to me“) can become toxic by activating so much emotional stress for both participants, that (developing of) mentalizing is impossible.

But how to manage this in groups? Per se group therapy is exposure to and exchange between the diversity of minds and for this reason it is an ideal place to mentalize (Bolm, IGA London 2009).

But if action overwhelms the group’s mentalizing capacity or fear leads to paralysis of the dynamic group process, this leads to a iatrogenic non-mentalizing fight and flight group!

General strategies in treating Borderline Personality Disorder

- I. Stable and coherent practical and theoretical framework
 - II. Priorities in goal setting
 1. Reducing suicidality, self harm and violence
 2. Facilitating engagement in therapy
 3. Stabilizing/developing resources
 4. Reducing burden of symptoms
 5. Changing patterns of cognition and behaviour
 - III. Strategies for managing crises and difficult situations
-

MBT-strategies to focus on Attachment and Mentalizing

- Activate attachment system – go emotionally in touch!
- Stop hyperactivation of attachment system
- Actively regulate emotional intensity
- Activate exploratory systems – create interest!
- Continue playful exploration and communication
- Avoid attitude of “knowing” and “objectivity” – create distance!
- Give contingent and marked mirroring
- Bridge the gaps of mentalizing
- Offer a coherent framework for therapy

This defines MBT structures and processes

Managing equivalence

- ✓ Be present, clear and structured
- ✓ Calm down, slow down, create less intensity
- ✓ Communicate “feeling felt”
- ✓ Validate here and now reality of transference

Managing transference

- ➔ Use transference-markers
- ➔ Do not reject externalised „alien self“
- ➔ Explore transference-triggers
- ➔ Validate transference as real experience in the here and now
- ➔ Be careful with mentalizing transference
- ➔ Do not interpret!!! (before patient is not perfectly stable in reflecting mode)

Typical MBT-interventions: Stop, listen, look! or Stop, rewind, explore!

MBT Group Therapists

- ✓ are present as a person, not only as watching experts (for the “correct” content)
 - ✓ actively regulate process and intensity to a repetitive positive therapeutic experience
 - ✓ do not overestimate group capacities to mentalize
 - ✓ actively use diversity and facilitate connections by asking “normal” and “circular” questions
 - ✓ do not tolerate group regression, long lasting equivalence or pretend states (i.e. to let grow a transference or to give a stage for re-enacting a traumatic experience)
-

Mentalizing together is playing together!

Good Mentalizing!

**Dr. med. Thomas Bolm, Klinikum Christophsbad, Göppingen, Germany,
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Friday, 8.3.2013 - 09:00-11:00

Plenary Chair: Ms. Marit Joffe Milstein

Presenters:

Ms. Miriam Berger

Ms. Marina Mojovic

The analytic group as an arena for reconnecting inner and outer detached self -states.

Miriam Berger

Presentation for the Second International Workshop of Israeli Institute of Group Analysis in Gonen.

I would like to offer some thoughts about the concepts of **dissociation, enactment** and **multiple self - states** as they are played out in the therapeutic practices of group analysis. I think these are concepts that can contribute an additional perspective to our work.

To begin with, I'll define them briefly just to make sure we have a common vocabulary.

Multiple self- states:

Self -states are defined as configurations that encompass feelings, experiences, memories, needs and motivations that can function independently of each other according to any given context. The idea that our inner world is not one cohesive entity, but comprised of multiple self- states that have complex interactions with each other is today a central part of the relational psychoanalytic discourse.

In short, each of us can be perceived as an **assembly of self- states** that have all sorts of **connections or disconnections** between them. With a bit of luck and good enough nurturing, they should be on talking terms with each other. Thus, to stand here now and present this paper elicits in me a specific self – state, that is very different from the one that is activated when I become a member in a small group this afternoon.

Anyway, I hope I shall be able to keep my stupid self- states under control and expose them only in the small group. This is another way of saying that self states

have a life of their own, a language of their own and a will of their own. They can show up as they please to embarrass and shame us when we least expect. It's easy to envision this assembly of self - states as an "inner group" that inhabits our personal world. Thus an analytic group can be thought of as a crowded space packed with by a host of different self- states that struggle to become heard and known to each other.

The idea of multiple self states is closely related to the notion of dissociation.

Dissociation:

Dissociation is defined mostly as a defense against trauma. It's a way to survive the unbearable. Bromberg who is known for his major contributions in this field says that dissociation "...disconnects the mind from its capacity to perceive what is too much for selfhood and sometimes sanity to bear. ..." it's an unconscious implicit "script" that says something like "*Whatever is going on is not happening to me*".

To this, I would add a more intersubjective aspect: namely, "*Whatever is happening in the relationship is not really my doing, and therefore it is also not my responsibility*".

Enactment:

The concept of enactment is really an outcome of the above understandings about the workings of dissociative processes.

Enactments are relational experiences. They can be defined as unconscious meetings, or rather head on collisions between dissociated self states, whether these interactions occur within one's inner world or with real others. When dissociated, disowned, silent selves take over and govern a relationship they can become destructive. Enactments produce "*Deeds without Doers*" (after Bion's "*Thoughts without Thinkers*"). Doers that act under the spell of dissociation are detached from the consequences of their deeds and from their personal or social meaning. They do not recognize that "*whatever is happening*" makes a difference and has a very real impact on everyone involved. It is as though one's *connectedness* to human *interconnectedness* has been cut off.

Having said that, I want to emphasize the main issue that is at stake here. Namely, the focus on the centrality of dissociation points to the excruciating interdependence between humans; to our absolute need for each other. It emphasizes the crucial importance that attachments have in our lives. It stresses the idea that relationships are life lines. They can provide strength and resilience, or be damaging and traumatic in many ways.

Dissociation: a bitter cure.

Dissociation (albeit unconscious) is a self made remedy. It protects one's connectedness to essential others through isolation from others. It is a bitter medicine that can become a sickness in its own right. It means one has to cut off a vital tie in order to preserve this same tie to someone threatening that is also loved and needed. The paradoxical nature of this solution is depicted symbolically by the mythological *Gordian knot*. The legend says that this knot was tied so well that only Alexander the Great had finally managed to cut it open with his sword stroke.

Clinical Example : "I didn't want to come here today".

A brief example from an analytic group can serve to illustrate the usefulness these concepts may have when applied to the processes that are played out between group participants.

The meeting starts with Maya's declaration she wants to begin the session.

She says: "**I didn't want to come here today.** It was very difficult for me. I am afraid the group does not help me. Despite all this talking, I am still stuck with the same problems. Nothing really makes a difference. My sense of inferiority doesn't leave me. It is as debilitating as ever. "

She is involved in developing a prestigious start - up project with a number of colleagues. Recently they reached the stage of negotiating a contract with foreign investors. The meetings were conducted in English.

Maya's English is rather poor. Gradually she started to feel she could not make any sense of what was going on. She could not utter a word and felt increasingly paralyzed. She felt stupid, inadequate and irrelevant. "I was the main initiator of this project, enthusiastic about its prospects and full of hope that we will make it a big success. I was supposed to be the professional expert, but instead, I sat there, dumb and useless. What a shame! It is so humiliating. I feel belittled and desperate. I am sick of it. "

This was an experience she was quite familiar with in her past. She hoped she had left all that behind her. But to her horror, the denigrated child she used to be caught up with her and expelled her from the conference room. "I hate her. It is pathetic". She feels she failed her colleagues and lost her dignity. This experience threatens to spoil her prospects and leaves her desolate.

The session unfolds with other group members contributing their own versions of growing up humiliated, excluded and lonely. At some point in the process, one member starts to complain he can never find the right moment to say anything adequate in this group; he ends up speechless, hurt and angry. He feels dismissed: "maybe, I don't belong here. I don't fit in".

He has a long personal history of squeezing himself out in order "to fit in". The more he succeeds in "fitting in", the more deprived and bitter he becomes.

The need to "fit in" to be appreciated and to belong, along with the fear of losing face and being ignored become gradually a lived reality between group members. It is apparent that these are not only experiences that happen "out there" in remote conference rooms or long gone childhoods. The desire to be heard and the difficulties to make room for one's voice become a personal explicit conversation of members with each other.

I feel there is a sense of urgency to speak up that prevails in this session from the start. It presents an apparent contradiction to the initial negation inherent in the proclaimed text. It seems as if the opening sentence "***I did not want to come here today***" hangs over the process and waits to be taken care of.

What can be the meaning of such seemingly paradoxical moves? What is it that is *almost* left out, lurking at the threshold of the group? What makes it so difficult to speak up be it in English, Hebrew or any other language?

Discussion :

From my relational perspective, one possible answer is that those contradicting moves indicate the presence of enactments. In other words, the discrepancies between feelings, intentions and actions can be perceived as *coded messages* that need decoding. **I suggest that it's a private "language" born by the group and used by the group to let it know that vulnerable self-states are gathered at the door looking to get in.** They are afraid to be exposed, but at the same time, also wish to invade the group space with all their ruthlessness. They can be envisioned as a bunch of trouble makers that are intent to "scream" until they will be heard and accepted whether they are "fit" to be presented in normative society, or not. They demand to be known in many insidious ways. Good or bad English, they want what they want, without concern for the consequences of their deeds.

As said, dissociated self - states contain one's personal history of painful experiences; at the same time, they also contain keys to authentic parts that were lost (or even squashed) on the way "to fit in". It's a different way to say that the return of pain is closely bound with the return of lost passions. Thus, to retrieve lost feelings, to become "in touch" may be experienced as a mixed blessing. From this angle, the authenticity that transpires in the lived interactions between group members can become threat as it is desired.

The apparent contradiction between the declared wish "not to come to the group today" and the urgency to risk it and "be there" despite everything is a coded communication in service of the wish to become more whole, more fully in touch with self and others. It points to the striving of group members to become real and personal; real to themselves and to each other.

I think that the fear of group members to expose their vulnerabilities to each other (their "true selves" if you like) cannot be attributed to processes of transference

misplacements only. It is fair to acknowledge that group members can hurt each other in a very real sense, much as they wish to heal each other.

In view of the emotional intensity involved, it's important to remember that group members enter this process by choice. It goes without saying that the group space should provide a safe base for the unfolding of meaningful lived relationships. However, paradoxically, the needed basic safety is created through the risks that group members are ready to take in real time. Thus, group process is a precarious balance between being safe, but not too safe. Bromberg warns us that too much safety may be stifling, and prevent the birth of new experiences. The paradoxical nature of therapeutic relationships is depicted succinctly by Mitchell when he says that "if you want to be part of the solution you will have to make yourself part of the problem". Thus, group members that seek solutions to their difficulties take upon themselves to become each other's problems as well.

Enactments are inevitable. As said before, it's an unconscious process that by-passes our proclaimed intentions. It takes courage and determination "to speak from the heart" and reveal one's desires and fears with the hope that they will be reciprocated. In this sense, Maya's choice to come and share her distress is an act of courage that opens a door for more intimate relationships in the group.

Needless to say, that this brief vignette provides only a glimpse into complex dynamic processes that can be perceived in many different ways. My purpose here is to use it only as an illustration of the subtle, unsolicited ways that dissociated self-states present themselves in a group.

Group Analysis:

Foulkes formulated a "Basic Law of Group Analysis" saying that group members create together the very same norms that each one individually deviates from.

I suggest that this Basic Law contains its opposite "negative" pole as well. Namely, group members create together also the prohibitions and dissociations that cut them off from themselves and from each other. The "***Free Floating Associations***" that according to Foulkes characterize the processes of an analytic group are interwoven with "***Free Floating Dissociations***". Together, they form a dynamic

continuum, define and shape each other, and can be understood only as they evolve into each other. It reminds us of Foulkes's metaphors about the interchangeability between background and foregrounds in group dynamics.

Thus, participants may silence their genuine feelings (be it sexual, angry, envious or needy) for fear they'll be ignored, excluded or shamed by the group. At the same time, their very behaviors, whether they signal blame or praise constitutes the group's norms about inclusion and exclusion that evoked each member's anxiety in the first place.

The meaning of associations can be understood only when dissociative processes are lived through and contained within safe boundaries of the analytic group.

Enactments can be perceived as a clash between banished self-states that have colluded in order to retrieve their lost dignity. When they are understood as such, they can become "*A meeting of minds*". (Lou Aron's known book that has been translated to Hebrew just recently). Thus meaning making in the analytic group is a spiral process that moves between living through enactments and understanding them in an ever widening circle.

The analytic group becomes an arena of struggling through enactments and negotiating the interplay between Hope and Dread (To borrow Mitchell's "Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis").

Enactments in the group can indeed be seen as "the royal road" to release relationships from the grips of past injuries and to make them more relevant to one's present reality.

I am sure that today Foulkes would have added Enactments to his list of major curative factors in the analytic group.

While preparing this presentation, I had an association to a poem by Emily Dickinson: it opens with the following lines:

I'm nobody! Who are you?

Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us -- don't tell!

They'd banish us, you know.

This to me is a poetic depiction of what can be termed as "*Nobody self states*". Paradoxically, becoming a "*Some-body*", namely, a unique subject is constituted through acknowledging and recognizing the "*no – bodies*" among us as legitimate participants of one's social and personal life. The "nobody self- states" contain the "others" we live with inside and outside; those "others" that are forged by ignoring, domination or shaming and moved away into the territory of the "Intouchables".

Intouchables:

Dickinson's poem points to an emotional truth that is depicted in the film "Intouchables" from which we borrowed the title of this workshop.

The film starts with a series of interviews of a selected group of trained professional who seek to become the caretakers of a wealthy paraplegic aristocrat. They all present themselves as emphatic, understanding and sensitive. These, they believe is the desired profile of the "dedicated caretaker" he looks for. The paralyzed aristocrat is entrapped in his body very much like the professional caretakers are locked into the norms that their socialization has prescribed. However the black guy that is finally hired for the job, is a walking emblem of all discredited characteristics, those that were cleansed out from the resume of his competitors: He has the wrong colour the wrong social status and the wrong motivation: he declares frankly that he came to get a signature he needs in order to be eligible for unemployment checks. He is open about his feelings be it sexuality or disgust. As the narrative unfolds, it is this authenticity that becomes a life line for his employer. It becomes apparent that the black man who does not "fit in" and his paralyzed employer, who is totally dependent

on others, manage to create a human bond of generosity and warmth. Their open responsiveness to each other breathes life into a situation that may otherwise be deadening.

When "Intouchables" are touched upon and reciprocated by others they can become resource of strength and vitality.

Bromberg (1993) defines health as: "The ability to stand in the spaces between realities without losing any of them" (p. 166). By the same token, the analytic group can be perceived as a continuous training in such capacities: group members **including the conductor** strive "to stand in spaces" while struggling to become in touch with each other's selfhoods.

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Intouchable '*Infant's Gang*' in the Group-Analytic Matrix

Marina Mojović

Abstract

Developing group-analytic matrix to reach mature capacity for containment, with sharing crucial painful psychic areas and growth of members, may require years-long devoted group's endeavor, when there are traumatized, borderline or other 'difficult' patients in the group. Emotional bonds and culture of free-floating discussion, dialogue and reflection have to be won against primitive states with 'aggression-on-linking', intrusive projective identifications and other attacks on free thinking and communicating.

Running small, median and large groups for more than twenty years in Serbia, a country with extreme and cumulative social traumas, I recognized that there often emerge in group-matrices images of destructive infants, even rogue, or monstrous, including complex combinations and collusions among them, with significant influence onto group processes.

Although basically originating in survival maneuvers of infants' selves out of desperation, various sabotaging clusters of internal object relations known as '*internal gangs*', '*mafia*' (Rosenfeld, 1971) or Fairbairn's '*internal saboteurs*', can powerfully sabotage group progresses: Split off terrorized/traumatized parts of infants' selves are often enslaved and encapsulated by other usually more robust infants' parts, which are identified with traumatizing cruel external objects and which then behave as guardians of these internal pathological systems. Both of those aspects of infant selves seem to be like orphans estranged from warm human attachments that endlessly stay in cold in-touchable states like in the world of Andersen's Snow Queen. Externalized and re-internalized during the analytic processes they often create '*invisible and in-touchable gangs*' within matrices. If, like Gerda's warm tears, to melt their cold hearts and dislodge troll-mirrors from their eyes, we have to be very careful, persistent and empathic in our endeavor.

Recently in a group with few war refugees, one young lady shouted: '*Why wouldn't these dark desperate children just hug each other for a while, separate from that adult world as it is?!*' - a vignette from a contemporary group shall be discussed.

**I've built walls,
A fortress deep and mighty,
That none may penetrate.
I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.
I am a rock,
I am an island.**

**I have my books
And my poetry to protect me;
I am shielded in my armor,
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb.
I touch no one and no one touches me.**

[poem / song by Paul Simon]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKY-smJ6aBQ>

We hear here a sad song about coldness and withdrawal from love, but paradoxically, it may warm up people's hearts. So, when the phenomena of *frozen hearts or of turned into 'rocks' and 'islands'* are symbolized by artists through their poems, songs or fairy tales, or through dream-telling (Friedman, 2008, 2011) and dialogues in families, friendships, or in our analytic groups - being mentalised (Fonagy et al., 2002) into images, narratives, and melodies, as precursors of further change – a bit of warming up may begin.

Sensitive tuning to fine pulsations in the relational field with the areas of the in-touchable, approaching them without intention and desire, in '*negative capability*' (Bion, 1970), searching for optimal distance from moment to moment, may create a safe-enough space for some sharing from these strange paradigms to appear. Paradoxically, the ultra-vulnerabilities are usually so extreme, that thoughts and feelings might fly-away from contact due to smallest errors in tone, time or internal desire to touch the in-touchable. Maybe somewhat like beautiful birds that meet here at Golan Height to warm up together in their habitat in prepare for further long journeys. We can come in touch with their beauty (from invitation flyer of our 'In-touchable' ws), if with appreciation and honest try to attune to '*rhythms of safety*' (Tustin, 1986) and natural fluxes of attraction and distancing, earn a bit of trust to enter one step closer to the heart of the matter. Interestingly, to mention, children and people with autistic features may first make contact with animals, because attunement with fine natural pulsations seems easier to occur.

In-touchable inner psychic zones – those impossible or almost impossible to be reached by other human beings, are usually hiding important, even essential aspects of the persons self – the '*vital*' or '*core self*'. Either those aspects were never exposed to contact ('*unborn selves*') or they did encounter contact in the past, but

then for various reasons withdrew from the human family as if having been cast-away from it (*'orphaned selves'*). For both types exposure to contact is unbearable, as if an existential threat - a fear of a *'catastrophic change'* (Bion, 1965, p.11), which may be to such an extent that recognizing the existence of one-self in the mirror of the other, even for a moment, might mean being destroyed in an immediate violent death.

Do we dare to knock on these doors?

'Do I dare to disturb the universe'?, asked Grotstein (2000) his teacher Bion?

Are we dealing here with imagined dangers or with real ones? Well, to my experience, it is not only a fantasy of a danger - many self-destructive, suicidal or other destructive acts occur within *'negative therapeutic reactions'* (Freud, 1917; Riviere, 1936; Rosenfeld, 1987; Hinshelwood, 1989). We often forget that success to make contact with the hidden universe of persons, groups or societies, *'to touch the untouchable'*, is only one part of the endeavor and the other huge part is to be able and equipped to cope with *'emotional turbulence'* (Bion, 1965, p.48) and crowds of shadow suites often start moving from the underground

Interestingly, even the very word *'In-touchable'* could fall to both categories: As in regular linguistic search it is unreachable, I thought, it's either an *'unborn word'* or expelled from the family of words. Perhaps we shall here have the opportunity to jointly rediscover the meaning of its coming into existence.

Similar mingling and disappearance of clear picture about these phenomena occur in our endeavors to understand them in ourselves, our patients and groups, as well as when searching throughout our professional texts. Namely, although traces of their enlightening can be found at the very roots of psychoanalysis and group analysis, and certainly there is vast literature on the subject, yet you may easily feel trapped as if in a labyrinth. Like a river sinking into subterranean passages and reappearing in sight, they are known variously as *'narcissistic resistance'* (Abraham, 1919), *'character amour'* (Reich, 1933), *'severe super-ego'* and *'highly organized defense system'* (Riviere, 1936), *'internal saboteur'* and *'endo-psychic structures'* (Fairbairn, 1944), *'fantasizing'* (Winnicott, 1971), *'mafia'*, *'gang'* (Rosenfeld, 1971), *'psychic equilibrium'* and *'addiction to near death'* (Joseph, 1989), *'claustrum'* (Meltzer, 1992), *'encapsulations'* (Tustin, 1981; Hopper, 1991), *'psychic retreats'* (Steiner,

1993; Grotstein, 2011), etc., and development of branches of knowledge is continuing. Each of us, of course, has our favorite papers and authors, who reached our professional selves, perhaps due to some specific style / code, that we recognize/mirror our own experience rediscovering it in a fresh and renewed way (Ogden, 2009). However, just when you think the big picture started to emerge, in one moment, only to be lost in the next - as if some special veils are operating here at the heart of the matter.

‘A rock feels no pain and an island never cries’

One mainstream of authors, working with autistic features (Sydney Klein, Tustin, Alvarez) created a fascinating amount of psychoanalytic research, which was helpful for my own understanding. They explore processes of encysting uncontained difficult feelings by hard shells, forming isolated psychotic islands, capsules, caves, because of intolerance of conditions that would enable any transformation to occur. Bion spoke on many places about those aspects of personality, which are exceptionally alerted to and persecuted by psychic reality and about the influence of the hostility to growth of the mind. Symington (2000) emphasizes that the pain is lodged within the personality, but it is not experienced emotionally, not suffered (Bion, 1970). Transformation involves its elevation to thinkable ideas, which *‘means a new exposé to ones psychic reality, like the new born’s raw exposé to the shocking and astonishing world’*. This step requires an accessible, thinking object so that the new experience can be tolerated and explored in becoming part of the mind.

Psychic Retreats

Among the concepts which in the last years many have been found useful, is the concept of ‘psychic retreats’, introduced as such by a Kleinian author John Steiner (1993) during his work with borderline patients:

‘a psychic retreat provides the patient with an area of relative peace and protection from the strain when meaningful contact with the analyst is experienced as threatening...serious technical problems arise in patients who turn to a psychic retreat, habitually, excessively, and indiscriminately.’ [p.1]

For Steiner it is a family of defensive systems and object relations, which facilitate the escape from difficult feelings through the avoidance of contact with people and 'reality'. Such retreats help people tolerate the pain of the vicissitudes of the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions by providing a 'slip' into a third, intermediate and default position. In these asylums they feel protected, yet often still in pain (Schafer, 1993).

The Barriers of the In-touchable Zone

Apart from barriers that in fantasy appear as inanimate walls, fortresses, hard shells, cysts, encapsulations, they can also take an interpersonal form, as an organization of objects or part-objects, which offer to provide security and which may be represented as a business organization, a religious sect, a totalitarian government or a Mafia-like gang (Rosenfeld, 1971, 1987). Thus, the internal pathological organization 'contains' the anxiety offering itself as a protector, but at the same time dominating the personality. The equilibrium is reached at the cost of a developmental stasis. Actually, the person is trapped in an omnipotent organization, from which there is no escape, but in which in a perverse way one finds narcissistic and masochistic gratifications (Steiner, 1993).

Guardians of the Barriers

Functions of the barriers like to keep *in* the trauma/un-suffered pain, traumatized/terrorized parts of self and to keep *out* the annihilating persecutor/traumatizer/terroriser involve guardians of the barriers, which take various faces/masks and positions. It is a territory where perverse mimicry operates with ongoing perfidious '*attacks on linking*' (Bion, 1967) with good objects (Mojovic, 2011).

In his recent writings Grotstein emphasizes psychic retreats/pathological organizations to be a '*sabotaging cluster or organization of internal objects ...that all have originated in **Faustian bargain or a bargain with the devil in order to be safe** - that is the infant's 'prophylactic', selective identification with the intolerable traits of his mother and/or father in order to 'purify' them and keep them ideal, because they are needed*' (2011, p.191). Those identifications, due to internalization of bad,

rejected aspects of parents, become the further *terrorizing*, *traumatizing*, *tantalizing* aspects - often lodged in the punishing/cruel/murderous **superego**.

The adult cooperative self supported by the therapist/group in the search for contact with the 'core self' encounters obstacles on those barriers - often a whole crowd with a variety of internal objects from shadow like: bizarre images of demons, vivified creatures, phantom-like figures, and archetypes of Devil's servants, as well as **omnipotent children figures** as part of the whole drama.

'Infancy addiction'

The age and images of those children figures are mainly linked to the age, when some initial huge infant trauma occurred, which had once detached the child from his family. Toddlers and older child figures may be connected to some additional significant disappointments in the 'world of adults', which created further estrangement and distancing. Those infant selves may transform through internal projective identifications the internal parents couple and their born and unborn children from good/divine into bad/nefarious, and secretly idealize *'privileged families like Mafia or other kinds of gangs, thus the first to be enslaved by conquering sadistic raider, the infant, and transmogrified to be his dutiful followers and protective retinue'* (Grotstein, 2011). Addiction to such internal arrangement, with fighting against injustice for revenge, and for the lost kingdom of infant's omnipotence, increases by time. Special infancy addiction may be of a kind of bitter martyrdom and grievance, with a *'martyrdom infant self'*, as a sacred cause, when leaving the mission is then experienced as unbearable disloyalty. Feral children surrounded with animals are characteristic like: a since early age a returning dream of *'a child driving a car 'jaguar' and no humans in the car but his close friends sitting on other seats in the car: puma, jaguar, and leopard'*.

Poetry of Myths and Literature

Poetry about feral children, abandoned from ordinary families, appear from Ancient times like in Gilgamesh myth, in legends like Romulus and Remus, and stories Mowgly, Tarzan, Pinocchio 'island of lost boys, and many archetypes of *'puer aeternus'* (Marie-Luise von Franz, 2000).

Twin dichotomy of the Good and Evil Child in Mythology,

Interesting is the twin dichotomy of the good and evil child, which appears as a Biblical theme of Cain – Abel, and in the splitting of the light (and one splinter falls away as Lucifer). Certain myths like Apollo –Dionysus dichotomy (Schwartz-Salant, 1982) propose the split as occurring at the mind at birth: one twin is identified with the power and movement of the sun; the other twin must bear the guilt of fallen light and travel as mirror image through the shades of the underworld in identification with a sun that emits darkness....

Andersen's Fairy Tale 'The *Snow Queen*'

Andersen's fairy tale **Snow Queen** centers on the struggle between good and evil as experienced by a little boy and girl, Kai and Gerda. An evil 'troll' (actually the devil himself) makes a magic mirror with power to distort beautiful aspects of people while it magnifies all the ugly, and delight in blowing its splinters into people making their hearts frozen like blocks of ice and their eyes like the troll-mirror itself..... On pleasant summer's day while Kai and Gerda were playing in their window-box garden, one falls into Kai's heart and eyes. Kai changes: becomes cruel. The only beautiful and perfect things to him now are the tiny snowflakes that take him into the kingdom of the cruel Snow Queen...

How to melt frozen hearts? Gerda succeeded with her devotion, braveness in spite of all sorts of dangerous on her journey to reach Kai, with her children's love and faith.

Our analytic groups provide unique relational space for similar journeys. I wish to emphasize that those dark internal infant's may take a secret lead in omnipotent gangs of destructive narcissism with their ghostly powers. On the other hand, similar to reaching the frozen self through contact with animals, also other similar child parts from other group members may easier resonate among each other, and take initial communication, like Gerda with Kai.

Illustration of Catastrophic Change and Transformation

I'll share a recent description of a change from a woman of 35, who is in therapy due to panic attacks with agoraphobia and depression. Tijana has a daughter of five

and now pregnant expecting a baby-boy. She often talked about her twin brother, who took most of mother's attention during whole childhood. From many social situations she withdrew with a feeling of being estranged.

Few weeks before the change she told a dream in the group: *'There was a huge wall clock, and suddenly from it jump out a monkey first on my shoulder, then on Marina's lap, then on other group members. Maybe my wish that you all see that I am not bad indeed!'*Few weeks ago there was an essential change, which she describes: *'That terrible dense cloud I again felt around my head making pressure and anxiety, so that I was almost to leave the group, but during that session while everybody was so empathic, something inside me at once broke, as a capsule. I feel it will never return. The capsule broke, in which lived that little girl in the garden world with narcissi flowers, just as those from the garden of our house. For all these years the little girl refused to join the world due to its ugliness.'* She cried with deep sorrow. *'I felt terrible, in total breakdown, as if going to die from the shock exposed to the new world. Even my skin was hurting. As if I now gain a new skin and immunity. Not only that I can't go back to that garden refuge, but I don't wish anymore. However, it is so disturbing, that I now see clearly, that the badness which I massively projected to people and even to you here, is in fact part of myself. The dark cloud is a terrifying internal figure, selfish and cold, like an all powerful God. But it is not somebody else, but me! I see how I was indifferent even cruel to many people, behaved hysterically confused, which I never wanted to admit. And at the same time I see a weak baby keeping its eyes mainly closed, as if not wanting anything. It's lifeless.'* She cried again and talked about identification with the baby in her body and the worries for the boy how to have faith for him, when this feeling of lifeless baby turned inside itself, paralyzes her.

We can see transformation process of a zone which was for years in-touchable, when main components of the internal arrangement became vivid.

My experience very much overlaps with the recent descriptions of Grotstein (2011).

1. **Cooperative personality**, who accepts feelings of dependency in therapy (Tijana who describes)

2. The un-grown, non-developing, 'endeavored', 'cast-a-way' personality-the **stuck infant-self**.(Tijana's lifeless baby-self)
3. **Anti/sabotaging sub-personalities** who attack the relationship of the cooperative personality and therapist/group; identified with the pathological organization (omnipotent garden-girl; teenage-refugee-girl hysterical- non-thinking women).
4. **The ghost**, the unconscious 'wrath', threatening the change and part of the whole gang .(Tijana's returning dark cloud)

There can't be any manual about how exactly to approach all this complexity. It is clear, that if the mind is to grow, it requires a meeting of minds and not too many missteps in the dance (Stern, 1997), but also not too few mismatch, disillusion, and separateness also fundamental to learning about reality. Yet the balance between match and mismatch needs to be carefully tuned to the developmental level (Alvarez, 2000).

Aspects of Group Process with Vignettes with Focus on '*Infant's Gangs*'

I shall present some aspects of a group-analytic process focusing on our subject. It is from a small slow-open one's-weekly group formed few months after the bombing of Serbia - heterogeneous in age from twenties to middle sixties, mixed disorders from borderline, phobia, depression, abused and traumatized members, two trainees. Most members had very difficult life stories, among else few were refugees. In regards to family situation, as well as professions, the group was also very heterogeneous: some in corporate business, owner of private shop, dentist, psychologist, students, retired and free artists. Characteristic was a rather heavy atmosphere with adolescent and artistic layers.

During the first year as a member there was a professional clown Darko due to his masked depression (complicated with excessive addictive states). He came to the very first group-session with his little dog and childishly sat on the floor (thus boundary transgression was immediately involved and needed carefully to be handled). Stories about him as a 'doctor clown' making children laugh in hospitals and orphan-houses, about his 'clowns group' wandering around the lands, by time changed coming closer to his huge childhood-sadness and fears, when his divorced

parents both left house and he kept caring for all his siblings.....A nomadic person living at times in caravans in woods, being also in an Israel kibbutz, it was surprising that he stayed for the whole year in this group, thereby reaching better contact with his underlying depression, cried in the group, and succeeded to stop much of his self-destructive behavior. Then he just apologized for having to leave. (During that period with his charismatic appearance in wasn't at all easy to help others find enough space.) Now looking back, at that time the **childish (manic)-rebellious anti-group (gang) was embedded in him**, and influenced shaping the group's matrix further to come.

I'll mention here also an early dream of a young dentist (refugee from Croatia), which she shared in a session just before an announced newcomer: *'In an underground earth-cabin a group of children. From dense darkness there appear faintly to be recognized staircases. I anxiously climb up and on the higher level discover an atelier with painting-material and artwork. I looked up and saw a beautiful open sky above me'*. As if the dream was foreseeing group's process and future - the newcomer was a student in ceramics, later another artist to join and an orphan member, a picture framer discovered joy in his own painting. It was also a vision for the group's journey from dark underworld group-retreats through creative endeavors **holding glimpses of hope**.

After Darko left, for a long time there was a rather silent, apathetic group atmosphere, neither expression of natural curiosity among members, nor sympathy, anger, or other linking, apparently –**K dominated over the matrix** (Bion, 1961; Aschbach & Schermer, 1987; Gordon, 1994). A middle aged physically strong depressive man, refuge from Sarajevo, with a history of family war losses in horror, was forcing a deadly silence with massive non-verbal projections of absurdity of any human talking at all. Communication was not only blocked, but as if an invisible dreadful threat, wrath leaning over the group allowing only horror images. An old artist talked about her sculpture she wished to bring: a lying body without a head in a black metal cage, below the body a mirror, and over the cage a huge spider black widow. It wasn't easy to associate, but shudder and horror in the air. Another time a young IT man talked in plane tone and mimic about his wish to poison the water system, again leaving everybody stunned, including myself for a while. A student member, stuck with exams due to gambling, stubbornly turning any efforts of the

group to look like stupid and absurd, adding to the –K. I remember that phase as dominated by a **perverse gang** (Mojovic, 2008, 2009). Individual member's gangs colluded into groups-gang keeping other aspects imprisoned.

As if those gangs were armed with demons in their service, only to call them, when needed. In dreams and fantasies war dragons, water hydra-monsters, gorgons (Mojovic, 2007) seemed to be warning everybody to stay immobilized, and stunned, deaf and mute. Challenging occurred from a member with a sleep disorder talking about leaving her to the mercy of a night demon. A dream appeared of a funeral colon marching in dark dense waters holding a baby, while the dreamer was sitting on a stone in the water with grandmother telling old stories. **Trans-generational transmission of trauma** suffering and surviving was apparent in the contents.

Generally the setting with its boundaries was appreciated - most members attending regularly and in time. It's containing function with stable presence of the therapist and the group had to last long enough, without any forcing for the group slowly to gain safety and trust for growth inspite turbulences. Personal psychic retreats of members could step-by-step disentangle as well as join into various transient inter-personal group and subgroup retreats as challenging transitional spaces (Mojovic, 2011). Just for illustration a vignette from one session:

The stiff paralyzed atmosphere lasted long and culminated in three sessions of practically total group silence. A dream emerged: of a group that was crouching for years in a submarine floating under water, with the dreamer trying to open its round door, but with water power immediately pushing her back. The dream stimulated fantasies and reflections about whether the dream represented collective escape from facing personal problems, whether hiding from circumstances of war in the group's environment or a sort of unconscious suicidal submarine journey. *'Do we know what kind of a journey this is?'*, *'The parents of this country were crazy and didn't care at all!'*, *'Maybe we can learn not to be collectively suicidal!'*, *'Is it dangerous to break our silence'*, were some of the associations. This group discussion illustrates how the fluctuation between positive and negative side of this group-retreat became approachable for mentalization for the 'work group'. The positive side of the submarine (as a protective object from anxieties and pain pouring too fast from internal and external reality), as well as the negative side (as a cold 'as-if' protective

object keeping the group in an underworld prison) could be considered, putting also into position of more mature choice. As the song 'Yellow Submarine' was mentioned, unconscious links to the therapist's name and blond hair were probably there too (Mojovic, 2011).

That session happened to be a **turning point of the group-process**: work group capacities increased, paying more attention to each other. Two members with problems of articulation were able to focus on them: An inhibited male member said *'my stuttering diminished here since I told you how annoyed I am with few of you.....'* The dentist: *'Some monster in myself doesn't allow me to express anything, but I say only half sentence in rough tone, which is very different from what is behind ...as if he denies anything to exist at all'*. Memories came about her stop talking with five when disappointed in the world of adults. Waiting for her sibling twins to be born, and to finally have a **children's world** as it should be, but she was brutally expelled from the role. *'I then decided to be a fighter for children rights, but realize now how part of myself transformed into brutality, and wore an amour in my crusade missions against adult's insensitivity and irresponsibility.'*

Thus, in the matrix there appeared to be **feral haughty children**: clown child, gambling child, crusade child, spoiled arrogant child, funeral colon child, and... From invisible territories of destructive narcissism the, until then invisible aspects of group matrix (Agazarian&Peters, 1981) - infant's gangs in powerful mutual coalition, could more and more become vivid and approachable for thinking, first in images described, later directly voiced...

On the other hand, it became apparent how the miserable parts of selves were pushed into deep unreachable spaces. The stuttering member shared a phantasm of falling down into a black-hole, where a **child in a coffin** was since ages ago, and don't dare looking at. Another female member, who had a brother-addict, told her recent dream about a **small girl in a coffin** pale making no sounds.

A tortured girl refugee from Kosovo very inhibited, revealed through dreams that her *'buried self'* was fused with mass-grave images and centuries-long nations suffering, in fact being dominated by a large group of *internal dead objects*. Merging of personal, family and social unconscious (Hopper and Weinberg, 2011) was revealed. Although the group was soothing her pain through warm presence, when the dismantling of her *'morbid retreat'* started, she cried out: *'If I wished to belong to this*

group, I'd betray them all forever!' meaning her abused, dead family and national objects.

In the last year two female members joined, both divorced with children: an older with 64, a refugee from Bosnia, and a middle aged organizational consultant. There was welcoming behavior, but also a lot of anger towards them, which I first interpreted as anger displaced from me. Both newcomers didn't take much space for themselves, but devoted to problems of others and had in common a **strong-women-attitude**, who can endure all suffering making few members even more irritated. They became group **scapegoats**.

Group rebellion was enacted in relationship to them, as if symbolizing the cruel super-ego. The older one couldn't bear anymore, said that she was hurt and didn't come for following few sessions. She told me: *'I finally must not obey! You have to understand that I will not go to that group! It is my new freedom!'*

That arose in the group huge emotional turbulence. Especially strong reaction was from a new painter, who had been an orphan, and vulnerable to women suffering. His few years with his mother who became ill after delivering him, were a treasure for him. Few sessions of very emotional discussions with fights among members became a very creative and fruitful group work.

The infant's gangs which were until then more or less hidden finally came to the open scene - a lively will that to know each other better. Dentist talked about a *'hajduk / guerrilla gang'* in herself, remembering how with 12 when war in Croatia/Vukovar started, many of Serbs were persecuted and massacred around her- she felt decisive to take arms to fight for lives of her family. Terrible feelings inside herself of special loneliness cried out, pain she until then could share only with her refugee group: *"What do you all here know at all about the pain?!"*

Splitting between refugees and those, who were during war in Belgrade. A student, who was a child in huge 'Storm colon' of Serbs exiled in one day from Croatia, for the first time opened up about that particular huge trauma. A dense dark internal girl came out, now vivid to everybody in the group, totally filled with hate and murderousness and told her dream: *'I rushed into the room in which was that General, "now I shall torture you!"*. Other member's hatred became accessible to expression, too. It was a very difficult work group period, but some deep healing set up. Terrible crying started and others joined! Dentist shouted: *'Why don't all these miserable children just hug each other for a while?! .. also with Croat children!'*

Immunity gradually increases. New themes come to the foreground, like rivalry, especially among infant's parts. A new submarine group dream was recently shared: *This time the submarine was huge, with a lot of space inside and many colorful interesting rooms on a journey towards the North Pole for Eurovision Song Competition. After a meeting and dialogues at the main living-room, visiting the kitchen, the dreamer went to her cabin discovering that somebody used her bed, and had to negotiate.* We can have many associations, as this group does, but time is limited.

There is certainly a lot further work waiting for this group – Apparently it still needs images of underwater and barriers of (in-touchable) steel amour for their **group-psychic-retreat**, but with a wider space, easier to breath, think and dialogue.

But, why a submarine towards North Pole?

Does the group feel brave now to encounter the Snow Queen jointly and directly? Her kingdom as a metaphor for the '*death narcissism*' with the '*dead mother complex*' (Green, 1982) of people, groups, organizations and societies, in which selves are buried in her necropolis' and all vitality for nourishing the tombs - may indeed occur in our groups. Especially with traumatized people or in traumatized countries. However, when the anti-group is to some degree disarmed, the deep hate contained to some degree, then '*group as an object of desire*' (Nitsun, 2000) as an organizing principle may gain strength. Only then some space may emerge for the warm tears of love and faith, like Gerda's, to start melting frozen hearts and dislodge troll-mirrors from human eyes.

In this group there are now tears in every session, the underlying sadness is oceanic. Hopefully the mourning can last long-enough before the new traumas freeze it again.

Infant's gangs in the group matrix as coalitions of internal gangs of members may be on one hand the invisible cause of the group's resistance, rebellion and refusal (Billow, 2012), but on the other essential and vital assistance for positive transformation.

Well, in reality Serbia, which was for many years exiled from all families of countries, even from Eurovision songs, seems now slowly to be moving from its isolation.

Brief glimpse to her Eurovision winner song '*Prayer*'

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= HFxeZXt74E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFxeZXt74E)

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Saturday, 9.3.2013 - 9:00-10:30

Plenary Chair: Dr. Pnina Rappoport

Presenters:

Dr. Avi Berman

Sue Einhorn

THE STRANGE PHENOMENON OF BEING A GROUP ANALYST

Ms Sue Einhorn; BA, CQSW, M.InstGA

At a time in Europe when psychoanalytic perspectives are under attack and finding the space for reflective work is increasingly difficult, I have found myself asking how and why I became a psychotherapist and why I was drawn to Group Analysis in particular. In relation to the focus of the workshop, I will look at the wish to understand and belong that struggles with fears of annihilation. Perhaps a key word is struggle because, when young and a political activist, the struggle was to contribute to a more just world. Now, the struggle is to understand the complexities or impossibilities of human beings managing ourselves in our personal lives, let alone influencing the world around us. It seems to me that there is a constant struggle to maintain the integrity of what we do in a hostile, judgemental world. The place of attack seems to be on allowing a sufficiently reflective space so that the 'mute symptom', the unknown can be discovered and given a voice. This is the essence of analytic therapy of all modes, including our own but is being attacked because, at a time of anxiety, when so much is unknown around us, in Europe and the USA, such therapy cannot be tolerated. I am interested in both conscious and unconscious motives for becoming a therapist but essentially, am using this opportunity to explore my personal journey and hope it will stimulate connections for others.

Some years ago, in response to Gerhard Wilke's Foulkes lecture, I talked about the freedom a reflective space offered when, whatever happened, happened somewhere else. Here is safe enough to think whereas there is where it happened. Usually it is located as having happened in childhood and we return to that strange place as adults at a particular point in time because the past intrudes or enhances the present. In Gerhard's situation, he could think more clearly about his experiences in Germany through making his life in England. I am reminded of this by the very personal thoughts I wanted to explore when asked to give a paper here in Israel. The very struggle and justification for survival that is the bread and butter of your lives does

resonate with the struggle and justification for survival that Group Analytic thought and practice is experiencing in Europe. Why, as I reflect on my 40 years of work, do I continue to find myself absorbed in other peoples' struggles and deprivations?

This thought occurred as I was sitting in one of my groups some weeks ago. It was the last session for a very long standing group member. He is talking about the journey he has shared with us. As he and we remember, I find myself thinking, why do we do this? Why did he and why did I? After a few years of therapy, he decided to train as a Group Analyst and, like most of our trainees, had to learn how to be a conductor in hospital or prison settings where patients are suicidal, borderline and very, very disturbed. He managed well and was well contained and supervised by the clinic where he was practicing. However, there he was a trainee and being assessed. As you all know, patients like this do get under the skin and even more so in groups. What these trainees brought to therapy was their unprocessed madness - the pain, the depression, the preverbal traumas that both they and many of their patients had experienced. One of my trainees insisted that what she needed from our group was to remain mute. Sometimes she would cry and sometimes she would tell us about her envy of others but, for months at a time, it would be impossible to reach her. Both she and the man that I began with had to struggle with being unable to think, being possessed by rage and losses that they could not ease with words. At times they would disappear from the group leaving us to manage their absence while they struggled with feeling lost and abandoned. As inexperienced trainees they had been plunged in the deep end and the fragmented, raging, hurting parts of themselves were endlessly triggered by their group members. Would their group survive throughout the training could be translated into whether they would personally survive.

These trainee placements reflect the growing crises in our services. As services are cut, service users are driven to greater extremes before they can qualify for treatment. At the same time there is a growing panic at the amount in both time and cost that mental illness and depression is costing the state. The only treatments to survive will be those that can show evidence that they work and that they are cost effective. Can Group Analysis demonstrate these things? Of course they are good and fair questions but done under the pressure of a war on services, can we think clearly? Why does it

take a war on services to even ask the question – does it work? Is it value for money?
What is it that needs to work?

Both psychoanalysis and Group Analysis developed during periods of war. The context of war has often been a creative time because fear of survival arouses questions about the nature of being human. Hope resides in the need to try and understand, to hold onto the mind when all around is reaction and fear. Foulkes, as we know, trained in Germany when terrible things were brewing but held on to the duality of human beings. Morris Nitsun explores Foulkes lack of attention to aggression and hatred but perhaps, like my parents, knowing it was there meant surviving it. Interestingly, for people like Foulkes, my parents and perhaps many of you in this room, survival is about finding one's mind, finding the capacity to think, to search for meaning and to bear to reflect on the experiences that have been so disturbing. Perhaps it is only when survival is secure that the whole picture, including man's cruelty and hatred, can be reintroduced to the present. How do you create a safe reflective space when worried about your survival? For our trainees, they had their therapy groups. My group had to be a secure, steady space so that some of this very unsafe emotional work could be experienced but was often not experienced as enough. I think it probably was! Teaching people the importance of such a reflective space is our struggle in Europe and the struggle for the survival of Group Analysis.

I do love groups and have been in them all my life in different ways but, I became a Group Analyst because I also hate groups. The competition for space, feelings of envy, jealousy, rivalry or feeling overlooked, incompetent but above all the ever present fear of being shamed, make groups harder in many ways than the hidden confidential pair in one to one therapy. How painful all this is. Recently one of my colleagues' asked if I had noticed how many Group Analysts had stopped conducting groups? He is very experienced but said that his groups give him more sleepless nights than all his other work. I agreed. Why then do we do it to ourselves? Why become a Group Analyst?

As we know, choosing to be a psychotherapist often includes needs for reparation both towards the inner family that was felt to hurt and, also as a need to explore the transmitted traumas unprocessed by one's family of origin. So, let me begin there.

I was a red diaper baby. This is an American phrase that describes those of us brought up by communist parents. My parents were communists through a very deep sense of wanting to fight for a fairer society. They were educated by the communist party, my father having left school at 13 and my mother at 14. They were East London Jews and brought me into a post 2nd WW world with the following 10 Commandments. I like the phrase (suggested to me by Jan Wiener who used her own family's commandments in her thoughts about becoming a Jungian analyst).

1. Remember that although the world is not a fair place. Human beings will be good in a fair world.
2. A **real** human being is one who contributes to society.
3. Ordinary people should be given a voice as they know what really matters.
4. Thou shalt seek to be informed. Not knowing is no excuse.
5. Don't trust non-Jews; don't trust anyone outside the family.
6. Thou shalt not dwell on the past. Thou shalt despise the casualties of the past within the family.

(The story of the escape from Russia was never told. The place from which they came was never told and the costs to the family in terms of death and madness were suppressed. Madness was a family secret – there were many family secrets).

7. You children are the purpose.

Jews defeat the enemy by the re-generation of the family. We children were symbolic – a defeat of fascism, a defeat of the anti-semitic and the purpose of the struggle.

8. 'Thou shalt make every effort to assimilate with the locals and avoid a Jewish Ghetto Mentality'. It is safer to 'pass' as non-Jews (hence my name, Susan Janet) so that we would not be penalised by anti-semitism and should not join the communist party for the same reason.

9. Education is the real church. Education includes culture. A love of music, literature and art transcends the basic struggle to survive in a hostile world.

10. Never get into debt and always make sure there is enough for the emergencies that will be bound to happen.

These rules show the extent to which my relationship with my immediate family was inculcated with history – with rules of distrust, anxiety and insecurity - of trying to belong but not really belonging. All the ideas were essentially secular. Being Jewish had nothing to do with god. It was the potential within the human being that needed to be nourished and cultivated by the right sort of social context. Somehow the right society would transcend the past – an unbearable past that could not be spoken.

Like many of you, mothering my mother and all of us protecting ourselves from her madness and my father's distress was great grounding for becoming a therapist.

In my 20's I turned my back on Jewish roots and decided to contribute by becoming a community activist and a feminist who was determined that ordinary people should have a voice. This entailed committees and meetings and protest rallies. 24hours was not enough. At the same time I was part of a consciousness raising group to explore how to liberate myself from the social oppression of being a woman. The busier I was, the thinner I became. The battle with my weight and knowing myself to be less attractive than most of my sisters, I now understand to be depression, anxiety and loss but at the time was just a source of shame and my inability to control anything including my mind. Desire for me was depression as it had been for my mother.

We need a story to hold us together but I was very unclear about what my story was and what belonged to my parents and the commandments I had internalised. By my 30's I realised that however hard we worked to reorganise society – and I genuinely believed that a social revolution was possible – we also needed to challenge our inner worlds. The women's movement understood this because the phrase, 'the personal is political,' really means that it is only by understanding how the external world 'penetrates to the core' that society could become a fairer place. We would organise to include an understanding of the unconscious. I was still politically motivated but desperate to put myself into words, found an analyst. I lay down and he said nothing.

I felt abandoned, ignored and as lost as I had been when I was taken into care with my sister – I was 2.5 and whatever language I had then was lost. This was not explored because I was desperate to do what he wanted so that he would give me some attention but none of this was understood. He fell asleep and I felt a failure. I should probably have had this analysis after my group analysis.

I became a Group Analyst very much in the spirit of my family's 10 commandments. I do believe that ordinary people can help each other and that we need the ability to value being able to help, together with an ability to use being helped. Groups are also extremely potent places for exploring the nature of trust – remember the commandment not to trust non-Jews or anyone outside the family? Group members trust us when we suggest a particular form of therapy but it is trust in our role. It is very different to learning when to actually trust the group members or the conductor with emotions or history that feel unsafe. It is perhaps part of taking the non problem seriously (Caroline Garland). Developing a judgement about who is safe to tell and when to risk trusting is essential if relationships outside the group are to develop successfully. I think that a safe-enough Group provides an arena for this. It may not give as much detailed insight as an individual analysis but what groups offer is the opportunity to achieve a quality of life and enough self-esteem to have relationships that nourish. This is a political thought as well as a Foulksian thought because it implies a more democratic form of therapy. My family's commandments certainly agree with Foulkes that the Group is the therapist, that members can often be heard more influentially than the conductor, while the conductor's job is to observe the boundaries and keep the Group safe.

And yet groups are counter cultural. The UK has grown an individualistic culture where there is shame in needing others but little shame in being exposed on reality TV shows. I think there is an almost secret longing to have as much individual personal attention as possible but shameful to acknowledge. This may be one of the attractions of a diagnostic category because that gives permission to have 'counselling'. It is not the whole person (or machine) that needs attention, just the bit that needs mending – bereavement, over eating, psychosis etc. So when people come into therapy for themselves, they find it strange when we suggest a group. 'Why would I want to share you?' a client asked. If I say that ordinary people can help each other if they feel safe

and heard. Clients say why come to a therapist then? They may have friends or family who don't help in the way they need or are isolated precisely because find others so difficult.

Often people come into therapy because they are preoccupied by feelings of shame, envy, jealousy, emptiness. These feelings make relationships difficult so when we suggest that these are exactly the areas that group therapy can help, it can take a lot of courage or submission (often described as trust but there has not been time to earn real trust) and quite a lot of desperation to agree to group therapy. Once in a group these very feelings of shame and envy painfully emerge together with a reawakened sense of deprivation. So much that goes on in group members' lives cannot be expressed as the space is shared and time is limited. People have to learn how to get the group's attention, what is useful for them to express and often have to tolerate waiting yet another week before they can talk – if they can still remember what they wanted to say by then! No wonder groups erupt from time to time as sharing with siblings can be rewarding but is it rewarding enough to make up for that familiar feeling of deprivation and never getting enough or being heard or being found.

Fundamental to therapy, I think is Foulkes' idea of the symptom being mute and needing translation into language. The language can be words or metaphors but they need to be heard and seen or worked with so that a patient feels understood and found. So many of our patients feel lost or abandoned and do need finding. As a man in one of my groups said the other day, 'it's only here that I have found my despair and only here that it feels safe.' So may be Groups do work!

The intensity of groups, or the ongoing theatre of the group does bring a life-force to the patients' world where even hatred can be better than numbness or emptiness. It is at such times that the conductor may well have sleepless nights as we are being asked to contain symptoms that as yet have no words but are being experienced and so wish to be found. What I really want to say is that above all, group members, patients need our minds. Whatever our intuition or capacity to recognise feelings in others and in ourselves, we need to be able to **feel with our minds** if we are to be of any use to our groups. I think most theories are really pegs to recover our minds and help us to think with our emotions. It is precisely that capacity that can be so easily attacked by groups

– not only groups of course. Resonance can be toxic as well as harmonious and that is when we have our sleepless nights.

The current debate in Group Analysis seems to hinge around instinct theory versus intersubjectivity. Are we driven by forces essential to the nature of the human animal or does being properly human depend on our capacity to learn how to relate so that an inner, ‘real’ self can blossom? I have to confess, I find both perspectives persuasive depending on the state of my Groups at particular moments in time. Should I learn Mentalisation, CBT, DBT or other current techniques for working with certain categories of people? I find all these techniques fascinating and useful when learning them and find myself thinking of particular patients or group members when attending such courses. I also think that certain group members are ‘Kleinian babies’ or that others need clear ‘mirroring’ to know that they are understood and need protection. However, I regard all these theories and techniques as pencil sharpening. To be able to think emotionally in the service of my group members or my patients, I need ideas and words to translate what they are saying or feeling or projecting (can’t really get away from theory), so that my mind can engage as a separation between us. I need to remain intact as a therapist or group conductor if I am to be of service to my patients. ‘A Real human being is one who contributes to society’ and that is what I understand the therapist’s contribution to be. To do this, our theories and techniques offer us particular ways of understanding the ‘reflective space’ essential to our brand of group analysis but should never impede the value of simply staying with not knowing. Our emotional minds may struggle hard to remain with such confusion, sometimes even with panic but I believe that is the real value of our reflective space in groups. This is a shared, sometimes unknown space where we wait for understanding to emerge often through metaphors or dreams but eventually, over time, in words. For example a woman who had been expelled from her childhood country during a war periodically re entered a shocked fugue state in the group so that she could be found and led into the current safe world again. At first we were all (including her) very disturbed by this but later, as it was understood, we were able to reach her and help until the behaviour receded.

This seems to be where we are estranged from those who need numerical, concrete proof that the method works. In fact I feel grateful to colleagues who are using

research methods to validate what we do but it is so hard to evaluate how a reflective space works

As I have said, I became a Group Analyst at a more unconscious level to repair internalised, destructive feelings as a legacy from parents who did not understand what it was to be a child. These destructive, internalised feelings had also been transmitted from historical experiences that had not been processed emotionally. The secrets that could only be felt created fear but I wanted to understand and try to be informed. Commandment 4 – Thou shalt seek to be informed. Not knowing is no excuse.

I think that the Large Group is unique to Group Analysis in this respect and became vivid to me when training Group Analysts in Russia. Group Analysis in Russia was also counter cultural but because their experiences had been of formal and family groups betraying. Our trainees were determined to value individuality and so most of them had been in dyadic therapy but such therapy also left them feeling lonely and disconnected from others. They missed the context of the group.

In the first two years we constantly re-enacted their fear of survival and loss so that the ‘shuttle analysis’ (as they called it – for us it was a Block Training model) represented a reconvening of a training community that would be abandoned again and again. Whatever we promised, they could not afford to believe that we would return but once they did trust us and in the survival of the Training, then the wars of Russia really entered the room. The personal material in the small groups would be familiar to any group analytic therapy group but it was The Large Group that was unique because it became the disturbed heart of our training community. The commandment to be educated and cultured had been crucial to the upbringing of most of our trainees – music, poetry, novels, theatre, stories all permeated as well as knowledge of science, medicine and of course, the internet. The inculcation of civilisation superimposed on a bloody history filled with secrets was constantly enacted through fights, splits and vicious attacks both on us and each other. It was the food between sessions that reminded us constantly of starvation and The Siege of Leningrad. That would come with us into The Large Group where we experienced and tried to find words for the legacy of Russia’s history and how the Iron Curtain had

affected all of us in that room. The therapy in the Large Group, not only helped people to gain confidence in being heard but primarily became the essential transmitter of intercultural understanding. It often seemed to be a place that was neither English or Russian but a shared space of its own.

My closing thought as I question myself is, of course, the crisis of my age. How do I evaluate whether I have been useful. I find groups challenging, privileged places but I am also aware that because I love being a therapist and that means working with people in distress, I do need to change to meet current ways of thinking and working. Freud says we are pleasure seeking so what pleasure do I gain from this work. I have tried to answer that a little already but, has being a Group Analyst helped me to grow and crucially made me ready to face my own mortality? After all it is my next developmental challenge. The survival of GA does reside out in the world but as the war or attack on psychological thinking takes place and we become more accountable for what we do, I am aware of feeling that I need to evaluate myself as well. Actually, perhaps I should ask, am I competent to evaluate myself?

These are models of a form of therapy that may well be out of date. Am I out of date? What part does the internet play within this value I hold of a 'reflective space' and 'emotional mind'? I am not against learning from other more structured forms of therapy and do, politically as well as for our own integrity, want Group Analysts to be accountable to group members and agencies that use our methods of work. However, it is not easy work and the demands of retaining an intact emotional mind in the service of our work also needs to be acknowledged. I do believe that Group Analysis can offer a reflective space where we can continue to try and understand not just the patients we work with or the group members who attend our groups but also use our training to struggle with trying to understand the world around including a world that cannot wait for our slow, process-driven, deprivational form of therapy.

Ms Sue Einhorn, Psychotherapist, A Training Group Analyst with the IGA, UK

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panel 2
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Simchon

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Panel 1

Leaving the Paradise of Idealization

Marita Barthel-Rösing, Group Analyst, Group Analytic Supervisor and
Organizational Consultant, Psychoanalyst

Which emotions are these which seem to be “intouchable”? – which mobilize defense and disappear before they can force their way into the consciousness – which however are present and effective in communication and influential in organizations and in society.

I would like to speak about the phenomenon of idealization that protects persons and ideas with idealizing transference from the sharpness of the own reason until the collapse of thinking. How much do we still need as adults the feeling to be protected within the belonging to idealized objects? – with the effects of manifold dependences.

To what extent are we aware of these dependences? How do we bear, that being adult finally means leaving the Paradise?

Idealizing dependences as defense of emotions of existentially being alone must remain untouchable. As soon as the light of recognition touches this darkness of infantile believe in idealized objects the return into not-knowing might be impossible. Paradise cannot be entered again – and outside there everyone is exposed to his own responsibility.

Group analysis is well suited to working on the need for dependence which we never completely overcome. Therefore groups with a democratic matrix are dangerous for every kind of rule. How to come in touch with this in Group Analytic Supervision in organizations?

Dialogue between Center and South

Tri-Dialogia: a series of study days in the Gaza-envelope area

Ruth Duek, Senior Clinical Psychologist, Group Analyst, CoChair of Besod Siach Organization

Besod Siach is an organization established by group psychologists from the political left and the political right of Israel, religious and secular. It has been active since 1992 and has held 14 conferences working with a group-relations model that included participants from a broad spectrum of conflict groups in Israeli society.

In 2012, a conference was planned to be held in the south of the country in collaboration with various institutions active in dialogue between and within local communities. For administrative reasons it was not possible to hold the conference in the usual three-day residential format. Nevertheless, we wanted to give the local population a taste of the tools that have been developed through the years of our activity. It was decided to hold three study days – each self contained – yet together giving experience with the various formats of activity in our conferences.

Through collaboration with our southern colleagues, in the planning and execution of the study days, we experienced significant dialogue. Central to this was our impression that the security situation was “*untouchable*” as a subject for discussion by the local population. And then came the war...

Suddenly our study days were “the right event in the right place at the right time.” For one day everybody was “in touch.”

Panel 2:

WHY TO TOUCH, ANYWAY? WHOM AND HOW?

Helena Klímová

Touching as the powerful way of non-verbal communication reflects the strength of both libidinal wishes and the fear of destruction. To ensure the physical closeness without danger special ways of behavior were developed by some species – the ritual behavior. However, with the humans the ritual behavior is not inborn, it has to be sought for, invented, created anew in every generation, culture, dyad...How is this search realised in the contemporary world? The lecture presents various examples, research findings and vignettes.

To Touch or not To Touch The Pain of Loss

Yona Weiss, Ph. D., Haya Simchon, MSW.

This presentation describes the group process with parents of children killed in terror attacks, with co-therapists. One therapist was on the staff of the organizing institute, the other was invited to join as co-therapist.

The group was characterized by powerful, unbridgeable forces: "remembering" or "forgetting" the loss. It was split within itself with the therapists acting out this split by way of role responsiveness (Sandler, 1976). The group unconsciously manipulated

the therapists to mirror and externalize the split between the members. One therapist responded by fulfilling the role of "keeping" the participants from suffering their grief; the other by "keeping" the mourners from forgetting their loved ones.

Amidst powerful emotions, the co-therapists came to an understanding enabling them to contain the split. What had been seen as irreconcilable differences could now be viewed as equally important and legitimate parts contributing to the well-being of the individuals and the group as a whole. From this middle ground, the co-leaders were able to integrate the split and help the group make peace with the existence of life and death as an indivisible cycle.

Workshop no.1

Touch - do not touch; the stranger inside Me

Michal Shyovitz, Dance Movement Therapist. MA in Special Education

Proximity and exclusion, attraction and repulsion, acceptance and exclusion, contempt - glorification, these spaces meet the body organs and movement. We will let them to be tangible, felt and moved inside the personal space and the group space. We will move between these poles and examine the possibilities for recognition these parts and the dialogue that occurs between them.

Movement Workshop, Group up to 25 people . Please come in comfortable clothes, welcome to take off your shoes.

Workshop no. 2

Knowing- not knowing Trauma

Marlen Maor ,clinical psychologist, Director of Amcha Ashkelon branch.

Speacilized in trauma@ psychoanalysis with individuals and groups.

Iafi Shpirer, psychodramatist, psychotherapist in Amcha Ashkelon branch, Theacher in Kivunim institud of Analitic Psychodrama

All of us exist at various points along a continuum from “not knowing” to “knowing” ours traumas, caught between the compulsion to complete the process of “knowing” and the inability or fear of doing so. “Knowing” trauma at its deepest levels of meaning provokes anxiety and threatens mental equilibrium, and, yet, can be the critical process for healing. While creating a narrative of the trauma is often considered to be the major pathway of “knowing”, it conflicts, paradoxically, with the accepted understanding that the psychic components of trauma are largely unsymbolized and, therefore, inaccessible through narrate. Therefore, for "knowing" trauma we must work within *the therapeutic space of this paradox*:

Our limited ability to directly "touch" trauma , make us rely on others intrapsychic worlds to "dream" (Bion) the trauma in order to reveal it and make it "touchable .i.e. The traumatized person needs to "borrow" the other unconscious in order to "know" their own traumas. In this Workshop participants will learn how to use methods in order to facilitate touching traumatic experiences through "the other" as a path

towards knowing. This workshop can provide an emotional and useful experience in touching those “not known” areas for therapeutic benefit.

Workshpo no. 3

Exploring the Erotic Self : Inside the Group and Through the Group Experience

Marcia Honig M.A., Doctorate Candidate; group and individual psychotherapist; art therapist.

"What is the Erotic Self which I intuitively bring to the group as a therapist and as a member? How does it TOUCH the others? How does it allow me to be TOUCHED by the others? "

Outside of the treatment room we are aware of the shaking intensity of the Erotic Self and the way it constructs the frame of our outlook to the world. Yet, inside the treatment room we tend to suppress it's authenticity from the real encounter; then, we deal with it as transference and counter-transference, at supervision, and try to "bring it back" to the group.

During the workshop we will try to study what creative places open up when we "get *IN TOUCH*" with the Erotic Self and learn how it "*TOUCHES*" the individual within the group.

Using experiential means, sharing, and theory, we will try to explore how the awareness of our suppressed Erotic Self, which is instigated in the group meeting, contributes to the movement of one's role within the group and the group process.

Workshop no. 4

Psychodrama and group analysis as a route to touch untouchable inner voices.
Dr. Judith Rybko

Psychodrama therapist, Group analyst, Jungian psychotherapist, and a senior lecturer at Oranim College.

This workshop will present psychodrama, a humanistic-experiential therapy, and group analysis, for personal growth.

Participants will be introduced to their strange and unknown inner voices, these "intouchable" inner voices as well as sub personalities – the many "selves" within. Individual work will be followed by using interactive psychodrama tools to create a dialogue within the others in the group. An atmosphere of warmth and empathy will facilitate a discovery of the needs and capabilities through meeting people.

In addition to dramatic play, to express deep "inner selves" participants will use a variety of arts such as movement, painting, singing, and writing.

Eventually, this workshop offers not only integration between schools of psychotherapy but also between the uniqueness of each individual and the others.

Workshop no.5

The Many Faces of Envy

Dina Leibovits – Cotin, Clinical Psychologist , Supervisor, Group facilitator.

Envy has many faces. More often it is a destructive force, but sometimes It can be a constructive one. It arouses feelings of guilt, shame and pain with which we may lose touch or even eliminate.

In a group, as in a family, we experience both its harsh and its positive forms. The envy that arises when a fellow group member shares his success in studies, in work or in a relationship, may leave another member with feelings of loneliness and failure. However, the same envy may become a catalyst for change and empowerment arousing the feeling that one might also experience the same success in the future.

It seems we all experience, at different levels the dialectical nature of envy. In this workshop I invite you to analyze this dynamic. When is envy a driving and a constructive force? When does it become a destructive force causing withdrawal and introversion? Are there differences in coping with envy in the only child compared to individuals who experienced positive or negative sibling relationships? I want to invite you to a dynamic workshop in the spirit of group analysis which will allow us to observe these issues together.

Workshop no. 6

“Knowing with Others”

Mishael Chirurg, MA
Clinical Psychologist

Galia Nativ,MA
Clinical Social Worker

If we ask what kind of person is able to make and sustain deep friendships, the answer is, obviously, one who is able to engage in selfobject reciprocity, ie. one who is willing to empathically care for others as he/she expects them to empathically care for him/her. Persons best able to offer reciprocal friendship to others are those who have developed the character traits of empathy, caring and the ability to be genuinely concerned about the well-being of someone else.

And what about the meaning of "enmity"? Is there an "enemy" we are not able to talk to?

In our workshop we shall first watch a short film about Arab-Jewish relationship in the Galilee – "We Go but the Earth Remains" . We shall then explore dialogues that can contribute to the creation of mutuality and examine the way in which this mutuality can contribute to the integrity of our Selves.

The aim of this workshop is to experience ways of enabling authentic encounters with others while remaining true to our own identities.

Mishael Chirurg is a Clinical Psychologist and staff member of the Israel Institute of Group Analysis.

Galia Nativ is a Clinical Social Worker and staff member of the Israel Institute of Group Analysis.

Workshop no. 7

**From "L'enfer, c'est les autres" to reparation through "Visage de l'autre": -
Playback Theatre as group therapy**

Ronen Kowalsky, M.A. Supervising clinical psychologist - private practice, Tel – Aviv. Acting, writing and directing in various theaters.

In his play "Huis clos" Sartre presents his main idea concerning the relationship among man and "the others". For him, as a result of the gap and misunderstanding inherent to all communications, every relationship restricts the free and authentic expression of man. The otherness of the other is hell of self. This description can be seen as representing a basic fault charactering many patients and situations, causing difficulties in internalization and limits capacity for empathy. These processes also have consequences in group, social and political levels. Levinas, opposed to Sartre, believes that any development, mental, emotional and moral, is possible only through exposure to the "Visage de l'autre", endurance to the distressing gap between self and other, an ongoing attempt to reduce illusory resemblance between other and self and ultimately the development and reparation of self through other.

Playback Theater is a theatrical form in which members of a group process life-events to a theatrical performance of improvisation (Fox, 1994). Playback Theater is also used in therapeutic settings. During this process, group members switch between a situation in which they "play the other", to examine and practice the experience and ability to observe the situation from his perspective, and "to allow the other to play me", to expand the perspective of looking at self from the perspective of the other. This process provides ongoing training in empathy and understanding of others and working through the difficulties involved.

Thus, playback theatre might give way to a transition from a Sartre-like to a more "Levinasian" experience - From "L'enfer, c'est les autres" to reparation of self through "Visage de l'autre.

Workshop no. 8

Touching ourselves with the voice.

Tamar Eyni Lehman, M.A. Music Therapist, Supervisor, Group Analyst.
Hernan Favelukes M.A.EXTH

Our voice is the primal connection to the world, meeting us in our mother's womb. By using it, mother-child-environment communication is created. It is the seam of mind, body and soul, directly connecting us to ourselves.

Our voice enables us to swim in the sea of our feelings and emotions. Through it and the group's space, we'll give a place to our inhibited playfulness, a place for us to be in touch with the continuities: vulnerability-strength, passion- fear, contraction-expansion and a place to them inside and outside ourselves.

Vocal improvisation, much like life itself, is a journey towards the unknown and the untouchable, continuously allowing us to create our reality in a daring, spontaneous and vital manner.

In the workshop we will explore our body as a sounding board, which receives and extends voices. Additionally we will meet our ability to sing our souls with a partner and with the whole group.

Through the group matrix we will experience the musical-vocal resonance and the effect it has upon our capacity to feel touchable, sharing our journey in a group discourse.

Workshop no. 9

Inter and transgenerational transmission : from our ascendent's stories to our own story and identity

Muriel Katz, PhD, Psychologist, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

The workshop deal with inter- and transgenerational transmission, which focus on the construction of identity between generations. The participants will be invited to explore their own family history. The issue is about including or excluding alterity in the family group and in the subject.

We will explore a part of our heritage and a part of our debts, a part of our desire to claim our group identity, to be recognized as members of our cultural identity.

What is the story of our ascendants? What desire do we have of being culturally assimilated, away from our roots and from our origins? Through the exploration of our own genogram, we will consider the possible articulation between biographical/narrative aspects and unconscious dimensions in transgenerational transmission.

Workshop no. 10

Our Inner Groups

Dr. Beni Rippa & DR. ERIC MOSS

In Group Analysis we look at different levels of interpersonal communication that are influenced by several kinds of “Matrix”. By matrix is meant the ever evolving web of conscious and unconscious connections between people in a group. In Group Analysis we identify three kinds of matrices, namely, the individual’s personal matrix, the group’s matrix and society’s matrix. Each of us carries all three of these within us. The purpose of this workshop will be to allow each participant to deepen his/her understanding of their inner matrix, with its known and unknown (intouchable) individual and group “objects”. In addition, we will examine how our inner group objects influence contact with our outer, interpersonal relationships. The number of workshop participants is limited.

Thanks & Gratitude

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Ms. Marina Mojovic

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Ms. Marita Barthel-Rösing

Ms. Ruth Duek

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Mr. Hernan Favelukes

9. Dr. Muriel Katz

10. Dr. Beni Rippa