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A HOLISTIC CONCEPT OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

Group Analysis VIII/3, October 1975, p. 172 – 174

The intention of this short essay is to outline the development and the present state of some depth psychological approaches in the field of group therapy. Several points which are developed in the course of this discussion are to serve as points of departure for the presentation of the central theme, namely, the sketch of a holistic concept of group therapy.

Freud's psychoanalysis, by its very conception, has as object of investigation and therapy the single isolated individual. Although Freud's theoretical work "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse" is constantly cited with regard to the beginnings of psychoanalytical group therapy, it is not concerned with the application of methods and techniques of psychoanalysis in the group, but instead with the relation of psychoanalysis to social psychology. Actually it is rather the case that the beginnings of a depth psychological group therapy were established not by Freud but by A. Adler, whose depth psychology, in spite of the unfortunate name "Individual Psychology" is clearly a social psychology. The problems of the patient are namely largely derived from, or explained by, his relationships to the groups in which he lives and which he must daily confront.

Referring to this the German Individual Psychologist, J. Rattner, writes: "In this context the following insight is decisive: the way in which one faces the You and the We fatefully determines his mental health or illness; the mentally ill individual is marked not only by his fears, internal disharmony, feelings of inferiority etc.... but also, and especially, by the fact that he is not "at home" in the groups his fellow men compose ... that, in other words, he has not learned the game rules for living together".

Or, as Adler expresses it, the development of "social interest" has not succeeded and the mentally ill individual is unable "to see with the eyes of the other, to hear with the ears of the other, and to feel with the heart of the other".

In Mead's terminology this means simply that there exists an impairment of the attitude of the "Generalised Other" (which is the attitude of the whole community), an impairment such that the individual cannot identify with others, cannot put himself into the place of the other. And according to Adler "the capacity to identify with others (must) be trained and can be trained only when one grows up with others and feels himself to be part of the whole.

Whereas Individual Psychology has maintained a for-the-most part unchanged Adlerian position, psychoanalysis has been characterised by a rather heterogeneous development. Psychoanalytical concepts were applied for the first time on group therapy by Burrow. Other early reports on group therapy within the frame of psychoanalytical methods come from

Wender and Schilder. These are still largely concerned with mixed techniques, the psychoanalytical principles being combined with didactical procedures. The size of the therapy groups varies here from 30 to 200 patients.

Thereafter the attempt was made to overcome the difficulties which had appeared by the restriction to substantially smaller groups and the use of settings better adapted to the specific psychoanalytical principles. A pioneering role is played hereby Slavson who defines a therapeutic group as a small group (5 to 8 persons), which allows an optimal degree of freedom and spontaneity of action and expression, and assigns to the therapist the task of preventing a "group fixity".

It is not possible here to elaborate further developments in psychoanalytical group therapy. It should simply be pointed out that today three forms of psychoanalytical group therapy are to be distinguished:

(i) Psychoanalysis in the group

Under this form we understand concomitant individual therapy with several patients, without group interaction being especially taken into account. The main advocates of this position are Wolf and Schwartz, Locke and Slavson.

(ii) Psychoanalysis of the group

In this case one works with the *group as a whole*, and treats the individual indirectly through his participation in the internal group process. Bion, who wishes to restrict the function of the group therapist to observation and interpretation and to allow the group itself to bring forth its momentary leaders, Grinberg et al, the Tavistock Group in London, as well as Argelander in Germany are to be seen as supporters of this position. Obviously this conception transcends the principles of classical psychoanalysis (as held in i) -

(iii) Analytical group psychotherapy

This is a "mixture" of the two forms mentioned above; i.e. analysis *in* the group is carried out as well as analysis *of* the group. This form has been more recently introduced by Foulkes. Whereas in (i) attention is focussed on the individual, and, hence, traditional psychoanalytical techniques are largely maintained, in (ii) and (iii) it is the group processes as such which are of central interest. It is particularly in (ii) that group processes are "holistically" regarded. Although the practitioners of this form of group therapy do not explicitly refer to the approaches of other authors, it is apparent, firstly, that correlations with Adlerian methods do exist, and, secondly, that insights from gestalt-psychology and the sociology of the family help to form the basis of this approach.

In this context Kutter and Rattner describe the therapy group as a "copy of the family", a conception which clearly points to a holistic observational method. Thus Burgess describes the family as a "superpersonality" (which is more than the mere sum of the individual family

members), and Koffka regards such a group as a "We" which assumes, qualitatively, a totally different value or meaning than the individual "I's" that quantitatively compose this "We". It is Argelander who has made a useful conceptual distinction between "group psychotherapy" and "group analysis" (as the two forms of group therapy), the second term referring here exclusively to psychotherapeutic work with *the group as a whole*. This distinction is, thus, analogous to that between (individual) analysis of the single personality (the "I") and group analysis of the superpersonality (the "We") as such .

Summing it up, it can be said that, as an object of analytical psychotherapy, group therapy is, in many regards, simply the projection of procedures developed in individual therapy. Yet approaches showing new possibilities do exist, and we are convinced that in particular those forms of group therapy which regard the constitution of the group and the dynamics within the group as a unified or holistic phenomenon possess a chance of overcoming the bias of the dyadic relationship "therapist-patient" (and the parallel reduction to the transference-countertransference pattern) taken from individual (psychoanalytical) therapy. In doing so, they could prepare the way for a new understanding of the phenomenon of group dynamics. Close contact with those disciplines which have made this particular phenomenon the principle object of investigation must obviously be maintained.