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Workshop:

Orienting Our Methodological and Clinical Practice in the Therapeutic Groups

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Levels of Communication of the Analytic Group

(S.H. Foulkes, 1968)

Levels	Presented by	Group Represents
1. Current Level tr. Level (= transference in broad sense)	Experiences in and outside the Group. Interrelationships.	Community. Society. Public Opinion. Forum.
2. Transfert Level TR. Level = Transference in specific sense)	Transference Reactions Repetition compulsion	Primary Family. Present Family and Intimate Network. (<i>Plexus</i>)
3. Projective Level Mirror Phenomena	Primitive phantasies Object relations. the "intrapsychic" shared in the Matrix.	Inner Objects. Part objects.
4. Body Level	Physical manifestations. Illness etc.	Body - Image.
5. Primordial Level (Jung's collective unconscious)	Universal Symbols.	Archaic Images. (e.g. mother).

Foulkes connects these levels of communication to the *spheres* of development of identity and relationships of E. Erikson (1965).

Levels 4 - 5 with Autocosmo

Level 3 with Microsphere

Levels 1 - 2 with Macrosphere

- S.H. Foulkes, the creator of group analysis, pointed out that the communication process within the analytic group arises in five levels. (See the attached scheme.)

This scheme is mostly mentioned in the writings of members of Group Analytic Society, [Pines M. (1981), De Maré P. (1972), Brown D. (1985), Powell A. (1994), Usandivaras R. J. (1986), Marrone M. (1992) and others], but - in my opinion - without conferring too much relevance to the scheme by itself (Ondarza Linares J., 1999a).

It is practically ignored among the group - analysts of other schools, within the United Kingdom (for example the bionian approach, mostly centred on the protomental world of the basic assumptions) in France, in Germany, in Austria, in Latin - America, in USA and in other countries. This, probably, is due, among other reasons, to the fact that the scheme, at a first sight, could appear didascalic, reductive, simplistic, and, above all, because it is not specifically and explicitly structured on a theoretical body of reference. Foulkes himself, as well known, promised a comprehensive book of his own theory in group analysis, that unfortunately never arrived (Foulkes S.H., 1957).

- In this workshop we'll try to demonstrate the importance of this scheme of levels of communication LC which allow us comprehensively to focuse some fundamental basic aspects of group analysis from the:
- Theoretical
- Methodological and
- technical clinical

points of view.

- Theoretical.

- 1. What, in its essence and specifically, is Foulkes' group analysis, in comparison with other "analytic approaches" to the group?
- 2. What is the "frame of reference" which make to consider group analysis as "a group as a whole" approach, without ever loosing the configuration of the *individual group conflict* in its therapeutical perspective?
- 3. The scheme of the communication levels frame up the basic aspects of group analytic theory:
 - Relatedness
 - Network and Matrix theory
 - COMMUNICATION, its epistemological and therapeutical implications.

- Methodological.

- 1. How Communication process is so linked with the group analytic process? What the transformative and therapeutical vectors are?
- 2. In which way the group analytical translation process is the equivalent of the psychoanalytical model of interpretation (defences, resistances and working through)?
- 3. The therapist task within the group analytic setting.

- Technical - Clinical.

Premise: the group analytic psychopathology (pathogenesis, pathoplastic and pathomorphic), considering the individual as a nodal point of a network and of a communication matrix.

- 1. The clinical configuration of the vicissitudes of the Communication process through the group.
- 2. Handling the levels of Communication and their clinical configuration in the group analytic field.
- 3. The group analytic optics and the non analytic therapeutic group. Rational and clinical premises to use the group as a therapeutical tool.

V. - PRIMORDIAL LEVEL.

- Even if it is seldom configured as a visible manifestation of the group's life, we consider that it is intimately connected with the primordial matrix (phylogenetic and ontogenetic) and it represents the deepest shared ground of the group.
- R. J. Usandivaras (1986) specifically wrote on the Primordial Level. (According to me, some considerations of the argentine group analyst may be referred to the projective level in its groupal magic polarity.)
- C. Rouchy (1982) and Powell (1994) also take in consideration the topic.
- In our experience, it appears more frequently as individual fantasy and representation, rather more shared "hic et munc" fantasies affecting the whole group. Ex.: a patient's dream of a field of jaws; another patient has fantasies of a great breast in the moment in which he meets or leaves the group (Commixture to the 3° Projective Level).
- Paradoxically it's possible that this unconscious level of groupal representation is dynamically connected to some group representation. Which occur at the first level, for example certain representations of Institution.

IV. - SOMATIC LEVEL.

- In the group analytic literature is frequent to present this 4th level comprehending both the somatic and the projective level. Nevertheless Foulkes (1964) describing the "level of the somatic and psychical images" clearly distinguished the Wernicke's (1906) conception of autopsyche (linked with narcissistic and partial representation of the Self) and somatopsyche (narcissistic representation of images of the body). In a specific work devoted to the levels of communication Foulkes (1968) described separately the somatic level in which the group lives itself as a somatic image and allows to share physical manifestations, "bodyly states", somatic metaphors (Kalinowsky), all representations related to the somatic scheme of P. Schilder (1923).
- Between the mental pole (prevalently intrapsychic) and the somatic one, a continuum exists that is settled up by the specular process, that occurs and is privileged in the group analytic process for therapeutical purposes (Ondarza linares J., 1989).
- Some group analysts specifically underline the importance of this level: D. Brown (1985), "pychosoma", A. Abraham (1995) "Co-Self".

III. PROJECTIVE LEVEL.

- It represents the crucial point, and, practically, fulfils the most part of the group analytic process. The primitive fantasies and narcissistic relationships, the protomental representations of the group [as pointed out by the object relation by M. Klein (1948 1952) and its further evolution] sets up the processes of separation, identification and individuation of the Self from their original fusion fantasies (individual or groupal). All these vicissitudes are manifested and shared in the matrix of the group which constitutes an active market of exchange of partial, inner or Self objects. The group, being initially a container, evolves transforming inner objects in real ones in a perspective of identity, meaning and communication.
- The projective and the somatic levels occupy the most part of the groupal process, configuring the vicissitudes of Relatedness, in its bipolarity, from the intrapsychic, individual pole to the Other, the group and the transpersonal pole.

The projective level has been the object of some specific works, M. Marrone (1992), M. Pines (1997, 1998), M. Nitsun (1996), A. Powell (1989) and myself (Ondarza Linares J, 1990).

IV. TRANSFERAL LEVEL.

- Foulkes distinguished between TR (Transference in specific sense) and tr (transference in broad sense). Transference Level is connected with transference in the specific sense mature object relationship which in the group is presented by transference reactions, compulsions to repeat. The group in this level represents the primary family, the present family and the intimate network.
- Transference refers to the total group situations any how (Foulkes S.H., 1968), is not confined to the therapyst, and from the other hand the IV level is just a level of configuration of the communication process.
- Many group analysts emphasise the peculiar manifestations of the transference in the group situation that gives to the group analytic process its particular significance. M. Pines (1978), König (1995) "transference triggers", C. Rouchy (1982) "archaic transference" signal the passage from the projective to the transferal level "in a perspective of identity, meaning and communication" J. Ondarza Linares (1999b).
- We know that in the field of contemporary psychoanalysis, the classical concept of transference (oedipal, genital) has been discussed and "open" to "lower" vicissitudes of the object relationship or as a vicissitude of the Relatedness or the Self (Kohut H., 1971 Self object transference), see S. A. Mitchell (1988), Shane (1997), B. Brusset (1988), R. D. Stolorow, G. E. Atwood, B. Brandchaft (1994), E. Pichon Rivière (1970).

V. CURRENT LEVEL.

- The Current Level is presented by the experiences in and outside of the group, the interrelationship in the group. Foulkes linked this level at the tr (transference in broad sense), and the group represents the community, the Society, the public opinion, the forum.
- In the every day life of the group is the line of convergence of inner and external reality of the groups.

Perspectives of the foulkesian scheme.

- The corner stone is to consider the communication at the center of the group analytic process: "unconscious communication on a hierarchy of levels" (Foulkes) can be considered as a spiral in movement that penetrates through the group in different perspectives.

1. - Vertical perspective.

- Topic: conscious, unconscious, preconscious.

- Dynamic: conscious, unconscious, preconscious: resistances and defences in the "translation process" of Communication (we'll see later).

- Interaction of the individual and group unconscious in a kaleidoscopic configuration of the Communication in a structural and economic *organisation* leading to more flexible boundaries of the structural agents of "second topic" Es, Super-Ego, Ego.
- Relatedness, a third topic? (Green A., 1990).
- Gestaltic Evolutive Genetic (Erikson E., 1965). The evolution of child "identity" and relationship from "autocosmus" (Levels 4 5) through microsphere (Level 3) to macrosphere (Levels 1 2).

Difference between the "perverse - polymorphe freudian child" and the "eriksonian child".

2.- Horizontal perspective.

- The level is a "culture" (Bion's sense, 1971) or "psychic field" (Lewin K., 1951) integrated by each individual (intrapsychical "valence" or needs).
- The group as a whole is not only a physical container, the body of the group, but it holds (as a micro and macrosphere) the group interrelationships, dramatisating and verbal performances (narrative evolution).
- A continuous interaction exists between the intrapsychic (individual) and the group context. Bipolarity of the relatedness and the communication process (from the intrapsychic pole to the transpersonal pole through the interpersonal one).

3.- Longitudinal perspective.

- "Renactement" of the individual network in the group situation.
- Transpersonal process in the perspective of relatedness in the group (belongingness identity meaning and communication.)

4.- Configurational perspective.

- NETWORK. The psychosocial context of belonginess of each individual, hierarchically predisposed.
- MATRIX. The inner context and shared ground of Communication.
- The interaction between network and matrix constantly configured in the group process.
- Gestaltic configurations of individual or individuals in foreground and the group context or back-ground
- Configurational vicissitudes of the "intermediary space" of Communication.
 - a) Temporo spatial "attunement" (here and now, then and there external reality and inner conflicts.)
 - b) Vicissitudes between the sameness and self steem and the "otherness" and being significant for others.
 - c) Vicissitudes between the continuum of opposites and their articulations, connections, links and new boundaries: examples, belonging differentiation, tradition innovations, normativity creativity, passivity activity, male female, epistemological opposites (splitting or conflictual thinking, etc...)
- Summarising, the levels of communication are "organised" following topic, dynamic, economic and configurational principles of *relatedness* in the whole group situation.
- 1.- Every level for itself is the result of "culture" (Bion's sense) spontaneous, or coattive prevailing hic et nunc in the group.
- 2.- An interaction occurs in this culture (dramatisation, or emergent interactions) that assume a "configuration" (in the gestaltic sense) more or less specific for each level
- 3.- This interaction and interrelationship are contained and held by a common representation of the group as a whole, that all the groups have unconsciously or preconsciously of the group itself. For example in the 2nd transference level, the group behaves as a parent song sibling because the common representation is being a family.

Theoretical basis

1.- Relatedness.

- Relatedness, seen as taking place within a basic and omnicomprensive group matrix, is the corner stone of our work theory" (Foulkes S.H., 1957).
- Is the relatedness a third topic (Green A., 1990) or a primary instinct?

 A movement owing to the feed back between clinical and theory is grounding in the psychoanalytic field: the relational model in psychoanalysis (Mitchell S. A., 1988), "The theory of vinculum" (Pichon Rivière E., 1970) and link (Brusset B., 1988), the Self Psychology (Kohut H., 1971) and his contemporary followers, Stolorow R. D. (1994), Shane (1997), the attachment theory (Bowlby J., 1988) and followers, myself (Ondarza Linares J., 2001) that emphasise at different levels the primary importance of relatedness.
- Relatedness appears as primary instinct that drives from one pole the narcissistic need of cohesion, belongingness and its vicissitudes, to the other pole the needs of identity, communications and meaning (Ondarza Linares J., 1999b).
- Bipolarity and conflictuality of relatedness.

2.- Communication.

- The communication process is at the centre of the group analytic process. This assert constitutes an epistemological change in the perspective and significance of the therapeutic process.
- The therapeutic process is not more or not only considered as an insight, an individual awareness, a sublimatory experience of forces and drives "moved" in a horizontal mechanistic causality, but the therapeutic process is looking for a new matrix of identification and meaning.

3.- Network theory and matrix construct.

- All this theoretical basis constitute the group analytic fundament to consider the group as a whole, with its methodological consequences.

Methodological issues.

- The equivalent of interpretation in the group analytic process is the translation process to move from closeness of symptoms to open a transformative significance, or "consensual valutation" (Sullivan H. S., 1953) of the conflict through the group.
- To promote a "Self Training in communication", paraphrasing Foulkes, communication, common action (De Maré P., 1971).
- To promote in the group situation the analysis of transference in action (Foulkes S.H.).
- The group analytic "working through" is addressed mostly at the resistances and "blocks" of communications.

Technical clinical issues.

- 1 The therapist task is previously to construct and to maintain a setting (group analytic setting or dispositive). The field of the group is developed as a situation of communication in which a translation process is constantly and repeatedly promoted.
- a) The therapist aim is to orient and to follow the group in this translation process.
- b) To promote an intermediate space of meaning, or significance for the group interaction and his defensive valence and resistances.
- c) For this purposal, first of all the therapist must be oriented himself or "mapping out" the level of communication and its significance of the group in the given moment. To follow the group (instead to be an active guide) is the group analytic way to abstinence and neutrality. But also he must "commute" or "sintonise" the levels of communication when it is requested, always looking for the promotion and the evolution of the group matrix of communication. The group analyst is matrix oriented.
- 2. The vicissitudes of the group analytic process of communication configure a kaleidoscopic phenomenology and group formations, (differently described by many authors according to the theoretic model, for example the bionian assumption basic group, the systemic model, etc.).
- a) The scheme of the levels of communication, may facilitate the therapist's comprehension of this rich group phenomenology but above all the scheme gives to him an orientation and awareness on the evolutive therapeutic or specific group situation.
- b) Sometimes the level that occupies the group may be of great therapeutic evolutive potential, sometimes it could be at a standstill moment or sometimes it could be the localisation of the resistance barrier or a confusive acting out against a more intimate communication.
- 3.- Levels of communication and clinical configurations.
- a) The psychopathological and clinical configuration represent the topic, economic, "communicational" interactionships between network and matrix.
- b) Remember the 3 axis of the communication process in its evolutive itinerary vertical, horizontal, configurational.

- Schematically but corresponding to situations that we can find every day in the group analytic clinical practice.
 - 1) Neurotic (Hysterical or Obsessive polarities) features. They are more easily configured at the second transferal level. The neurotic vicissitudes must be played within the group field.
 - ("Specular spectacular space" Kaës R., 1985) until its deep and free significance is "located" (location is the equivalence of the mutative interpretations Foulkes).
 - The communication is fragmented with this hysterical dissociative feature between the manifest and the latent content, the dualism to show and to hide, the somatic metaphors of conversion (Ondarza Linares J., 1993), the hidden and threatening meaning of never communicated sexual or incestuous taboos of the "Familial Roman", elaborated in the network of familiar context.
 - 2) Personality disorders, character and psychosomatic disorders. The 3rd and 4th levels constitute a "market" to exchange internal objects, Self object, protomental valences and psychosoma "radicals", thanks to the "resonance" and to the "specular process" of the translation process. Some performances, hate and love vicissitudes, separation individuation features, the performance of projective identification in its bipolar significance defences and communication the handling of denial, splitting or "optimal frustration" may be played in the intermediary space of the group holding by the group itself, and in the initial phase, with the "double alleance" (with the therapist and the group as a whole).
 - Example: a PB identifies herself quite superficially with the various psychosexual conflicts that are being exposed by the group members in the free association chain... but her empathy is rather superficial, she needs to identify to the others as a piece of a puzzle or a mosaic, that contains her identity diffusion. The same patient uses to interrupt the communication in the group specially in moments of tension, dramatising "change of level" in a pseudo optimistic or moralistic way as result or her denial and splitting mechanism. The group is tolerant, but the moment of confrontation more or later arrives ("optimal frustration", H. Kohut).

3) Psychotic features. As it is well known some psychotic states are well treated in the group setting under special conditions (the argument must be specially explained.)

The group functions as a container or supportive holder, in a supportive and empathetic mirroring confrontation.

- The psychotic patient, conversely, allows and sometimes pushes the rest of the group to immerge into deeper material or level
- 4) Institutional psychopathology. The level appears as a normal balance between the affective needs of individual and the social function of the group.

Paradoxically, in this level takes place the psychopathology of institution. Some deep psychodynamic-enthropic residuals of the institutional groupality, for example, bureaucracy considered as a value by itself, reyficating the institution as a real external groupality. [Many authors have studied the argument: E. Jaques (1955), F. Fornari (1966), in the group analytic field, M. Nitsun (1996), J. Ondarza Linares (1997 - 1998), Pagliarini].

We only mention the argument which could be specially developed.

- 5) Level of communication as indicator in the therapeutic use of the group in different models and perspectives.
- Group analytic optics gives a revolutionary sight of psychopathology, focusing the individuals only as nodal points of a psychosocial network.
- The levels of communication may be used as a marker to get awareness and to increase our efficacy in the therapeutic use of the group.
- What is the level of communication more apt for a given group of patients? For example, for a group of aged patients, of neurovascular pathology? For a group of training or of young patients?
- To recognise ant to take in consideration the level that are more appropriate, allows to work worthly with the specific group project or setting, it may allow, for example, to establish a balance between the "orthopaedic pole" and the "transformative pole" of a therapeutic group.
- Remember, for this purpose, the scheme of Foulkes Anthony describing the level of therapeuticity of the group.
- 1. Group of activity.
- 2. Therapeutic group (in broad sense).
- 3. Psychotherapeutic group (group analytic group).

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