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**“Experiences in Groups: Relevance of Group Process to Committees Involved in Analyst Training”**

I'll begin by telling you some about the Tavistock Group Relations Work in which I have been involved, then speak about experiences in groups, focusing on the unconscious processes that are ubiquitous to groups, then I will relate to experiences on committees involved in training and evaluating candidates to become Jungian analysts.

**Tavistock Group Relations Work**

Wilfred Bion's ideas about groups have strongly influenced the Tavistock Group Relations work. His work in general is quite relevant to Jung's work. Central to his ideas were myth, religion, spirituality and the numinous. When he wrote about groups, he focused on the unconscious processes as we do in our work with individuals. He spoke of Basic Assumptions and Work Groups, both of which occur in groups. As Suzy Spradlin and Jean Kirsch write in their paper, “Group Process in Analytic Training and Institute Life,” “A work group is analogous to the individual ego, functioning in creative relationship to the Self; a basic assumption group is analogous to an individual seized by an unconscious complex.” (p. 362). Bion writes, “As work-group function consists essentially of the translation of thoughts and feelings into behaviour which is adapted to reality, it is ill-adapted to give expression to basic assumptions. For basic assumptions become dangerous in proportion as the attempt is made to translate them into action.” (Bion 1961, p. 157). In Jungian terms, when an individual is in a complex he is not in relation to reality.

In his book, *Traumatic Experience in the Unconscious Life of Groups*, Earl Hopper quotes Lawrence, Bain and Gould's summary of Bion's theory of groups, which I will now quote, "When any group of people meet to do something, i.e. a task, there are in actuality two groups, or two configurations of mental activity...the sophisticated work group and the basic assumption group ...What is the experience of being in a [work] group?...All the participants are engaged in the primary task because they have taken full cognizance of the purpose. They co-operate because it is their will. They search for knowledge through using their experiences. They probe out realities in a scientific way by hypothesis testing and are aware of the processes that will further learning and development. Essentially, the [work] group mobilises sophisticated mental activity on the part of its members which they demonstrate through their maturity. They manage the psychic boundary between their inner and outer worlds. They strive to manage themselves in their roles as members of the [work] group. Furthermore, the participants can hold in the mind an idea of wholeness and interconnectedness with other systems. The participants use their skills to understand the inner world of the group, as a system, in relation to the external reality of the environment. In a [work] group the participants can comprehend the psychic, political, and spiritual relatedness in which they are participating and are co-creating. The [work] group can be seen as an open-system. The major inputs are people with minds who can transform experiences into insight and understanding."

"Groups which act in this consistently rational manner are rare, however, and, perhaps, are merely an idealised construct. In actuality... people in groups behave at times collectively in a psychotic fashion or, rather the group mentality drives the process

in a manner akin to temporary psychosis. The term 'psychotic' is being used in this context to mean a 'diminution of effective contact with reality' ... (Menzies-Lyth 1981, p. 663). This is a group mentality that has such a culture that the individual, despite his or her sophisticated and mature skills, can be caused to regress to, and be temporarily caught up in, primitive splitting and projective identification, depersonalization, and infantile regression." (p. 94) (pp. 29-30 in Hopper)

That concludes the quotation which I hope gives you a sense of what Bion meant by a work group in comparison to a basic assumption group. The work group is functioning in relation to reality whereas the basic assumption group is functioning out of a complex.

Tavistock Group Relations work usually takes place in conferences that are set up so that participants who come to the conference are considered the members in an organization, and those who put on the conference are the people who administer and run the organization. The conference is set up to maximize the experience of unconscious processes coming to consciousness in order to learn about unconscious processes that are ubiquitous to groups and organizations. Another important aspect is that participants are able to learn about their relationship to leadership and authority as individuals and within groups and organizations. The purpose is to raise consciousness about these relationships in order to create members of societies that are conscious about both individual and group behavior in order to have more effective working relationships within societies throughout the world. The idea is that, even a small group within an organization, that is working to become conscious about the effects that groups have on individuals, can affect the larger organization. The primary concern is that people become responsible members

of society; that understanding the effects groups have on individuals will help people to be more thoughtful participants in society.

Another aspect of the work is to develop consciousness about our projections onto others which is one of the ways the Tavistock work is related to Jung's ideas about our relationships with each other. And, as Jungian theory also tells us, the Tavistock work proposes that being able to acknowledge our projections onto others is important in being responsible and ethical in our relationships.

Tavistock has always been a relatively small movement in the world with more European organizations involved in the work than in the United States. Here the work tends to be within mental health groups, whereas in Europe there has always been involvement by many other types of organizations such as government agencies, and private businesses unrelated to the mental health professions.

In a Tavistock conference there are several different group constellations. Usually, participants are assigned to small groups in which all members are strangers to each other. In these groups one or two consultants will make comments about the process in the group with the purpose of helping the group to study itself. The group's purpose is to study whatever occurs in the group as a way of understanding the unconscious processes that occur in groups and as a way for each individual to learn about his or her relationship to leadership and authority. The fact that the consultants do not give direction is often stressful for the group and this leads to members becoming more able to reveal unconscious material by speaking about whatever comes to mind during the group meeting. The more that group members are able to express their free associations, the more material there is for the group to work toward understanding the effects of

individuals on the group, and the group's effects on the individual which is one of the primary purposes of the experience.

In a conference there are other group constellations in addition to the small group, but I will not go into those at this time since I believe the small group experience is more related to the material I want to talk about that is relevant to committees involved in training and evaluating candidates in our analytic institutes.

### **Training Program at the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco**

As a candidate and now an analyst I have participated on both sides of the evaluation procedure, though the situation in the Institute in San Francisco is different from the training program in the Inter-regional. I will explain the process in San Francisco since that is where my primary experience has been. Then I will relate to the main issue, "What is the value of understanding and focusing on the process of the group among the analysts on committees that are involved in training and evaluating candidates?"

In San Francisco, there has been a primarily subjective process in evaluating candidates (we are working on re-vamping the training program) since Joe Wheelwright, who I'm sure many of you at least know of was one of the founders, did not want it to be an academic program as I understand it. Candidates are admitted by an Admissions Committee, then passed on to a Reviewing Committee that meets with the candidates once a year for an hour discussing their progress in the program. Candidates are in weekly seminars that meet two hours one night a week for four years. Reading is assigned, but there are no papers or exams. The seminar groups are small, so there is a lot of space for discussion, if the analyst who is leading the seminar is interested in having

the candidates participate in this way. There is a 40 hour case conference that is required to which an analyst, chosen by the candidate group, consults. Again, there are no papers or exams. After admission, the first test after one year is meeting with the Reviewing Committee to be evaluated and passed on, or held in preliminary status. The next test is meeting with a Review Board made up of the Reviewing Committee and one or two analysts from other Institutes that have been invited to participate in an evaluation process in which the candidate is required to present a seven page paper about work with a patient that is the basis for discussion at the meeting. At this time, if the Board agrees, the candidate is advanced to the control stage which means being moved on to the Certifying Committee. This committee meets yearly with the candidate until the candidate and committee agree that he or she is ready to present the major paper, a 50 page paper that describes work with a patient and includes Jungian theory. Before the paper is presented to the Certifying Board which, like the Review Board, consists of the four members of the Certifying Committee and one or two analysts invited from other Institutes to participate in the evaluation procedure, the candidate is usually seen two or three times by the Certifying Committee to review drafts of the paper and to learn about how the candidate is developing personally and professionally toward becoming an analyst.

At the Institute in San Francisco, the committees change every year. There are four members of each training committee and each year the Chair leaves and a new member comes onto the committee. The member who has been on the committee for three years becomes the Chair. So candidates are continually faced with new people evaluating them throughout their training.

## **Experiences in Groups**

I know this is a very different process from that of the Inter-regional's training. I presented it in order to set the stage for examples in groups that have occurred which include my experiences as a candidate as well as my experiences on both the Reviewing and Certifying Committees in San Francisco. In addition I have had experiences in other groups, such as group therapy, as a participant, and as a therapist doing group therapy, as well as my involvement in groups as a consultant and leader when I have been in leadership positions in organizations.

What seems to be ubiquitous in groups and organizations, is that as individuals we re-create our family situation. It always interests me when patients talk about their work situation, how often there has been a re-creation of their family dynamics when there are problems with co-workers or bosses. I think an unconscious process occurs so that people are hired in jobs by bosses who need to create their family dynamics, so that employees are unconsciously selected based on an unconscious need to fulfill this dynamic, I believe, in the hope that the family dynamic can be healed and lived out in a healthy way. This happens sometimes, and sometimes not. Consciousness about this process can help to deal with it differently from what occurred in one's family of origin.

My own experience of having been orphaned as a child leads me to orphan myself in organizations. One of the ways I have accomplished this is to speak my inner experience in groups so that others are sometimes offended, or disturbed in some way that I may have become a pariah, or at least feel like a pariah. The Tavistock work was easy for me because of my capacity to speak out, in fact, it taught me to do this, and for some years I acted in other groups beside Tavistock conferences as though all groups

were Tavistock conferences. Often people would tell me how appreciative they were that I was speaking up about what they also felt, but did not have the courage to say. But others, I am sure, felt very uncomfortable and alienated from me because of my pronouncements. This is how I re-created my family of origin situation. It was many years before I could stop myself from processing my inner experience in groups in this way, and I am even now not always successful in containing these inner feelings and thoughts.

I do not think I am alone in this process, but we all relate in groups in different ways, depending on our family and group experience, and on our consciousness about who we are in groups and what we want from group experiences.

What we want from group experiences is another very important aspect of how we are in groups. There is frequently an unconscious, or conscious desire to have the group be the Great Mother, in only her positive aspects. The group is seen as the benevolent container that one did not have in infancy or childhood. The group is seen to have the potential to be omnipotent, omniscient, and totally benevolent. It represents the containing all good mother.

Peoples' fears of groups are justified. Because of the unconscious processes that occur, very upsetting experiences are usual, leaving many people to decide they do not want to be involved in any group. However, we are all involved in groups, especially in our Jungian Institutes and Societies. Our organizations function by way of groups. Committees of all sorts are usually how these organizations are able to accomplish tasks, create projects, train analysts, and so on.



So, what happens in groups that they have such a bad reputation? For example, on training committees why are candidates and analysts so upset about their experiences? I believe it has to do with our aversion to groups and lack of belief that studying group process can be of help in the way groups function. We believe strongly in learning as much as possible about unconscious processes in the individual. It is the same with groups. The more we learn about the unconscious processes in groups, the more potential there is to work effectively in groups and to deal with difficulties in creative and life enhancing ways.

### **Effects of Being Oblivious to the Group Process**

Several authors have written about the projections that occur in training committees within psychoanalytic institutes. Owen Renik in a paper entitled, “Standards and Standardization,” and Patrick Casement in a paper entitled, “The Emperor’s Clothes: Some Serious Problems in Psychoanalytic Training,” have written about the difficulties training committees have with candidates due to the fact that our work is so uncertain and does not have clear methods that are proven to be successful. They suggest that candidates are then expected to validate the analysts’ ways of working, by working in the same way as the evaluating analyst. There are also criticisms made about candidates and other analysts such as, “He or she does not do analysis.” This also leaves candidates wondering what they are doing, and concerned that they are not doing analysis, but not sure what it means to do analysis given the many different ways that analysts work.

The uncertainty in our work stirs feelings of inadequacy and inferiority in all of us at times, and sometimes, more frequently than not. The feelings of inadequacy in analysts may then be projected onto the candidates during evaluations. When a candidate works

differently, or even when a candidate may be showing creative work that is different from the examining analyst, this may arouse feelings of inferiority, or could arouse such feelings if the analyst did not immediately become critical rather than curious about the candidate's way of working. Otto Kernberg wrote a paper entitled, "Thirty Methods To Destroy The Creativity of Psychoanalytic Candidates," in which he lists, half humorously, how analysts can keep candidates from creative work because of their own envy or insecurity, for example by insisting that the candidate rigidly follow Freud's ideas.

An interest in group process has the potential of allowing curiosity about one another to surface, especially our differences. Working with each other on committees is usually more comfortable when we feel similar about ways of working with patients, and about our theoretical ideas, but we learn more from being with those who are different if we can tolerate the discomfort.

I have used Michael Fordham's ideas about the deintegrative/integrative process to think about differences and how we need to be able to tolerate confusion, helplessness, disorientation, and worse, when we are with people who think differently from the way we are used to thinking. I think this applies to our relationships with other analysts as well as with candidates.

Here are my thoughts about Fordham's ideas as applied to the learning situation, a situation that we are all in when we are evaluating candidates. Both analysts and candidates need to be open to learning.

## **Deintegration**

What is it that happens within us when we are faced with someone different from ourselves—of a different race, ethnicity, culture, age, temperament, philosophy, political party affiliation, and so on? One typically becomes anxious, frightened, threatened, thrown off balance—that is, one has an experience of deintegration. A typical reaction to this is quickly to gather forces to defend against these feelings, a defensive integration or reaffirmation of what is familiar. From this familiar position, one has forces to attack the other, distance from the other, demean the other, and so on. We gain our balance by retreating to what is familiar. We close up fast—that is, defensively integrate—in order to protect ourselves from anxiety, disorientation, and whatever other discomforts we feel.

Fordham postulated that the deintegrative/integrative process occurs from birth throughout life. When something new is experienced, the infant or adult experiences a breaking apart in order to be open to taking in the new thing, so that new information or experience can be integrated, and, thereby, the person is enlarged. For example, when a hungry infant cries, the experience that sets off the crying is a deintegrative process. The infant has opened to the experience of being fed and then integrates this experience, so eventually, as it grows and can speak, it does not need to cry when hungry. The child can say it is hungry, and eventually will expect to be fed without deintegrating. This is a developmental process—that is, as the child grows and develops speech, she has the expectation that food will be forthcoming when she asks for it.

In deintegration, one experiences the tension of opposites; both good and bad are present simultaneously. Deintegration is a state of helplessness, disequilibrium, disorientation, not knowing. The ego has to tolerate the tension of opposites and avoid

splitting—that is, one part cannot be projected in order to create a pretense of wholeness, as the infant does when it projects all the bad or all the good onto the absent or supplying breast. Envy, for example is an experience of loving and hating at the same time; one desires to have the person who is envied stay and leave at the same time. It is difficult to make sense of the experience, and one has to be able to tolerate a seemingly irrational state. One experiences being torn apart, and if one can tolerate the experience, the process actually creates a coming together. The experience itself is therefore one of opposites, the opposing tensions occurring within the person (Allphin, 1979, p. 77). When one is deintegrating with unpleasant feelings in reaction to encountering differences in another, one must consciously experience the feelings, examine them, and perhaps talk about them with the other.

I believe this experience happens in groups, and because I am speaking about analysts involved in groups on committees that train I am postulating that whenever any of us is faced with learning something new, a deintegrative process occurs, especially if the learning requires giving up an old way of thinking or doing. Deintegration takes place in order for the new process or idea to become integrated. The new idea comes from without and from within—an insight—an “aha” kind of realization that often has both a numinous wonder about it as well as a potentially shame-inducing, sudden obviousness that one can’t believe one missed, with maybe some fear of the contempt of others that one hadn’t gotten it before, leaving one disoriented and vulnerable.

In contrast, the state of integration is experienced as a comfortable time when one is clear about what is occurring in the group. There are no feelings of stupidity, fear, or confusion. When a committee member is deintegrating and trying to take in new learning,

she needs be able to depend on the committee to “hold” her until the new learning is integrated and she returns to a state of equilibrium. At these times, the committee is to the colleague what the mother is to the new-born infant, a self-object in Kohut’s terms, or the one metabolizing the chaotic experience in Wilfred Bion’s terms (Allphin, 1979, p. 85). Bion’s understanding of the process of transforming the paranoid schizoid position into the depressive position seems analogous to Fordham’s deintegrative and integrative process. According to Bion (1962), movement to the depressive position—that is, movement from Beta function to Alpha function—requires metabolization of the chaos of the paranoid position. Like Fordham, Bion thought this to be a developmental process occurring throughout life.

Often when we have this experience as a member of a committee we may have the feeling we don’t know anything and are floundering and upset about who we are as an analyst and evaluator, maybe especially when we are very experienced. This occurs when we are discovering something new or very different about the analytic process, especially when the new information is imparted by a candidate before a committee that is made up of analysts who are training and evaluating the candidate. If an analyst on the committee is admired and considered to know substantially more than candidates and or the other committee members that analyst may be more vulnerable to defending him or herself against deintegration with judgment and criticism of the candidate.

Deintegration is often beginning when unpleasant feelings occur within one or more members on the committee. The analyst or analysts must consciously suffer uncomfortable feelings in order to support learning and a return to an integration of a different point of view.

When we are faced with differences in the other, if there is not a sexual tension between the two people, there often is discomfort. When we are unable to identify or empathize with the other, we experience deintegration, unless we defend against that experience. The misuse of power is one of the ways we defend ourselves against the discomfort of deintegration. We gather our forces and criticize, demean, or even kill the other in order to keep ourselves comfortable. It is easy to misuse our power with candidates, especially when we are in the position of evaluating them. We need to be conscious of the power we have, in particular, when we feel discomfort and become judgmental with candidates. It would help to wonder about whether or not the candidate has stirred feelings of inadequacy in us at such a time.

In a paper entitled, "Problems in Collegial Learning in Psychoanalysis: Narcissism and Curiosity," Warren Poland states, "Behind our convergences and divergences lies the restless marriage between narcissism and scientific curiosity. When our narcissism is secure, or, even better, mature, we are free to venture farthest in our inquiries. When our narcissism is threatened, open-minded outward-looking inquiry deteriorates into a politics of identity." (p. 251)

I had a difficult experience when I was certified. It was a time that it was known throughout our Institute that there were problems within the Training Committees. I believe my difficulty had to do with differences that were not being dealt with among the committee members, and my own difference from some of the committee members in the way I worked as a Jungian candidate. I had had extensive experience and training as a clinician from Freudian mentors and teachers and had come to the Jung Institute in order to learn Jungian theory and its applicability to working with patients. It was a time at my

Institute that analysts were very interested in Self-Psychology and Object Relations theory in which I had been steeped for several years. I therefore did not have the opportunity to learn as much about Jung's ideas and their applicability as I had hoped. I think members of the committee could see that, and rather than speak with me about the deficits in a way that would help me learn from them, I believe they were avoiding deintegration and instead, criticizing me in such a way as to ground themselves in their ideas and ways of working. I think I even could have been asked to continue in the training program, rather than being certified at that time. I would have been upset, but probably no more upset than I was with the experience as it occurred. I would have deintegrated, probably defended myself against that with feelings of inferiority, but eventually I might have gone for help to learn more about the material for which I came to the Institute in the first place. Instead, I was certified without the support of the full committee, which left me for many years feeling that I was not a real Jungian analyst. I have worked not to have other candidates have such an experience. This is part of my interest in presenting this paper.

### **Positive Effects of Attending to the Group Process**

My experience on the Training Committees at my Institute have been different, and more fulfilling for myself and I hope, for the other analysts and candidates with whom I have worked. Both on the Reviewing and Certifying Committees of which I have been a part we have worked to speak honestly to one another about our differences and difficulties with one another. When, for instance, I have been uncomfortable with another analyst on the committee who worked very differently from me and we have talked about our differences, it has helped us to respect one another's differences and be able to listen

with curiosity and interest. For example, an analyst who was not interested in talking with the patient about their relationship and I spoke together when I felt so uncomfortable about that difference between us. It was uncomfortable to bring this up, but when we talked about it I learned about a different way of working, and of experiencing the analytic process. We often came to the same conclusion about the candidates we were examining, but from different directions.

In another example, I was confronted by another analyst on the committee about how adamant I can sound when expressing my point of view. I felt upset, not understanding what felt like a very harsh criticism without any example of what I was doing. I suffered and initially my efforts to understand were rebuffed. I thought it was all over between us and that one of us would have to leave the committee. But eventually, with more time to talk and calm down we were able to understand our differences and became close friends.

I think these encounters are examples of what attending to the group process is about on committees; that we speak honestly to one another about our differences and our discomforts with one another, including, and especially, our discomforts with the ways other analysts treat candidates who come before the committee. We so easily project our inferiorities, especially on candidates, that we need to be vigilant about ourselves and how we experience other analysts relating to candidates when the candidates are before the committee waiting for judgment. It is a vulnerable time for the candidates, but it is also a vulnerable time for the analysts. We need to be cognizant of how vulnerable we are when we sit with other analysts judging candidates. We are also being judged by the



other analysts and are judging them, especially when we do not know each other well and work differently from one another.

Analysts on a training committee are also in the position of competing with one another, hoping the candidate will be impressed by what the analyst has to say, and hoping the other analysts will be impressed as well. So, we may find ourselves speaking in order to hear ourselves and be heard by the others in the room. I know I have found myself recommending readings to candidates who come before the committee, and then thinking that I was showing off to my colleagues and the candidate, even when the recommendation was very likely useful.

Warren Poland states, “Beginning with an analytic quest held in common, we soon act not as if we share the goal of extending knowledge but as if we are competitors in a battle to outpace each other. Questions of theory or technique are then felt not as useful, but as attacks on personal status. Vanity, thy name is everyone.” (p. 252)

My hope is that these thoughts will stimulate discussion about how we relate to one another on Training Committees; and that we can all learn from one another in the discussion. I think this can happen most readily if we all have the courage to openly disagree and to openly be curious about one another’s ideas and criticisms.

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