



ARGO Associazione per la Ricerca sul Gruppo Omogeneo
la Rivista, Gruppo: Omogeneità e differenze

Group psychoanalysis: 50 years of work report



**Homogeneous Groups Yesterday and Today
Round Table with Argo Members**

Edited by Nadia Fina and Adelina Detcheva

Interviewers:

Nadia Fina (NF) and **Adelina Detcheva (AD)**

Interviewees:

Stefania Marinelli (SF), **Silvia Corbella (SC)**, **Simonetta Bruni (SB)**,
Lilli Romeo (LR)

NF: I start with the first question, which concerns the foundation of the Argo Onlus Association. So, let's say that the first prompt to this Round Table and Interview concerns the how and why the Association was founded to research the homogeneous group. What prompted the people who imagined and founded Argo Onlus to set it up? We thought that this question could be a question addressed to Stefania [Marinelli] and Silvia [Corbella], because we understood that it was somewhat thought up by both of them. It seems to me a necessary initial question.

SC: Of course, you're right! It's just that unfortunately Claudio [Neri], who was, along with Stefania and myself, one of the founding members, is not here tonight. It was the year 2000.

SM: Who, after all, is also the person who put Silvia and me, for example, in touch with the conference and the first issue of *Funzione Gamma*.

SC: Yes, we had never worked together until then.

NF: So, what was it that led the three of you - we include Claudio Neri, although he is not present this evening, but we have rightly mentioned and remembered him - what led you to found the Association?

SM: As always, research, as well as at that time, was very active at Claudio's chair at La Sapienza in Rome. As always, research is circular, so it is difficult to say whether 'the chicken or the egg came first', i.e. it is difficult to say whether the observation of homogeneous groups in the clinic made us think, or whether the first historical analytic group in the field of Bion's tradition of studies, i.e. the hospital where Bion and Foulkes did the first psychoanalytic group with soldiers with war trauma, was a homogeneous group, and the research started from there. So it is difficult to say whether theory or practice came first. But it seems to me that at a certain point we asked ourselves, in a research attitude, what happens when people get together and feel that, for some reason, either they have been thought similar to each other, or they feel similar to each other, or for one reason or another. Then I think Lilli will tell us more, in particular, about when a group is homogeneous, because it is monosympathetic, or it is monothematic. That is to say, what happens when in a common field, in an emotional and mental field put in common by being in a group, the notion of being equal appears, of having been thought of as equal by those who made up the group, or of feeling equal at some stage of the shared process for some reason or for the type of request for help that was brought.

SC: I believe that in founding the association there was also the desire and pleasure of exchanging thoughts, starting from different theoretical references, of welcoming our differences in a mutually curious and respectful way. You and Claudio started from a strongly Bionian theoretical reference, while I was referring to a Foulksian group-analysis type of work.

SM: But I'll make a small quibble, Silvia, since there's this discussion that's actually very useful. That is, I ask myself - certainly Claudio came from Bionian studies and the Bionian tradition, but I also think that Claudio Neri

himself was in a research attitude - first certainly to update the paradigms, then to differentiate himself and then to find his own way. And at this point, just today I was talking to Lilli about this, it comes to mind that Claudio did a bit like Bion, of pulling in the nets and then, when you pull in all the seas, seeing what the catch is. So, the idea of connecting with related disciplines, because the task of psychoanalysis is to penetrate other fields or to enrich and enrich related fields. Or dialogue, in short. So I believe that there was not so much an idea of starting from a model as of seeking a model or several models by connecting. The connection. That was a little parenthesis...

SC: I think what you said is very important. The connection, the curiosity towards different models, has always characterised even the Association to which I belonged, which was then and still is the APG [Association of Psychoanalytic Group Psychotherapy]. There was really an interest in confronting different models, in enriching oneself and identifying oneself through confrontation with otherness.

SM: So, let's say that, homogeneity was an object of study, because groups can be made in many ways and when they are homogeneous we have to say what a homogeneous group is, why it is homogeneous, in what sense. What do we mean by homogeneous group.

NF: In fact, that's the very question I was going to ask. What do we mean by homogeneous group? Maybe Lilli can give us an answer on that.

LR: Yes, I will try to do so, also taking up what Stefania and Silvia were saying, about the importance, let's say, of comparing different models. As someone who came later to this association, I can also say after many years - because I started attending the Argo Association and groups with Stefania in 2003, so it's been many years - and I have had the opportunity to learn myself from experience that there has actually been, continues to be and is very fruitful. So it is from this comparison that an idea of what homogeneous groups are was born, let's say in general terms of definition, because homogeneity really manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways and levels. So, in more superficial terms, we can say that homogeneous groups are groups of people who come together because they are united by a certain condition, status, gender, a common interest, an identity, that is, in some way, and then, let's say they develop, homogeneities emerge in the course of the group experience that are even deeper. However, a clear distinction cannot be made between homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, precisely because the element of homogeneity is detectable in all groups, even in those that are pre-conceived as heterogeneous groups. So it is, let's say, an important clarification in my opinion, especially if we consider that historically, at the

beginning the homogeneous group was considered, how should I put it, second level, with respect to the heterogeneous group, because it was believed that the element of homogeneity represented more of a defence that hindered group processes, rather than favouring them. Instead, the research that has been conducted over all these years has shown that it is precisely the elements of homogeneity that can, precisely in their characteristics of specialisation, represent instead elements that can favour, in certain circumstances, the psychic activity of the group and therefore also its evolution. So this is certainly an important element that I think is useful, in short, to bring. And then we can talk about what are the specific areas of use of experiential groups. Certainly the privileged sphere is the institution for several reasons. Meanwhile, the institution is also the environment in which a homogeneous group can be better organised or more easily realised, as well as for economic reasons, let us say. But it can certainly happen that several people who are united by a certain condition or who share the same problem, etc., more easily approach, either independently or because they are directed, an institution, association, or other, which deals electively with that specific problem. This obviously facilitates aggregation. As regards the definition and distinction of the different types of homogeneous groups, we can certainly think of the two most important ones, which Stefania has already mentioned, which are all either monosymptomatic or monothematic, to say that the former deal more with, let us say, and have more as their objective to deal with and resolve a discomfort, a pathology or an organic disease or a psychic pathology. Thus, individuals come together with this common objective and the group itself has as its primary objective the treatment of the illness, even if then, let us say, the objective is amplified and becomes more complex in an attempt to favour a more overall evolution and transformation of the personality of the members of these groups who participate in this experience. The monothematic group, on the other hand, is prevalently, let's say, a group that deals with or is born with the primary objective of carrying out a support, prevention activity, rather than training, and that therefore has as its primary purpose that of working on this, which remains the central theme of the group, so that if transformative changes occur in this experience, because it sometimes happens, let's say, among the participants, this occurs in a secondary manner, that is, not sought after as the primary objective. As an example better known to us, at least to me, at least for the model that I follow and with which I have compared myself with colleagues who all come from, let's say, training courses relating to specialisation schools of different origins, I can think of the experiential group that derives from the Bionian model, but even in this area there are elements of commonality, of homogeneity, which concern both the more superficial dimensions of the members' characteristics, and then the elements of deep commonality that are expressed in a diversified manner in each individual group experience.

NF: Sorry to interrupt, but you are introducing in a more structured way, let's say, a topic that has already been introduced by both Stefania Marinelli and Silvia Corbella. That is, what are the reference models of the homogeneous group? And I think this part needs to be made a bit more explicit.

LR: Yes, we can certainly do that, although, I have to say, it is certainly a complex issue, because there are so many models. Certainly the models that from a historical point of view are, let's say, the primary reference models are those that both Stefania and Silvia mentioned: the models of group psychoanalysis and group analysis with Bion and Foulkes, precisely because, although they were not born as experiences that already saw the group as a homogeneous group, in reality they worked on these elements of homogeneity, elements of homogeneity that then always confronted them with those of differentiation, let's say. It used to happen now and it still happens today. If I think, for example, of Bion's experience, on which I will not dwell much because it is widely known, let us say that alongside what were the common characteristics that made the composition of the group homogeneous, that they were all traumatised soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder, all belonging to the same military institution - and Bion himself was one, - the aim was to favour the reintegration of these soldiers into the army, and to do this, Bion valorised the differences of the participants, so that in his experiment each individual participant was invited to make his or her own personal contribution in the choice of carrying out certain activities. So let's say that this aspect of models and model comparison is something that has ancient origins but is always ritualised. Precisely because we too, in short, I who belong to the much later generations, have been able to experience in my own experience that among us colleagues each of us has a different training, albeit psychoanalytic, but of a different matrix, and it was precisely this and it is precisely this that still favours, let's say, a fruitful exchange that allows for a better understanding even in having constituted, thanks to the shared common culture, a model of intervention that is also shared. This, however, has not erased the differences. And it is precisely these differences that make it easier, let's say, to better understand the functions of the dynamics of a homogeneous group and what the outcomes may be, the processes that are activated, both evolutionary and those that have to be kept at bay, because they can, let's say, in a certain phase of the group's life cycle, play a defensive role. So then the analyst's analytical function together with all the activities of the group mental process that are activated within the group, let us say, allow these phases to be overcome. And so it is precisely the element of homogeneity that can play an important function in this. Because it becomes an element, let's say, an attractor of aggregation of all the elements that are common, it acts a bit as a counterfield

as Stefania Marinelli would say, and that facilitates dialogue, however, also with those that are non-homogeneous elements. So it activates a series of processes that are oscillatory, individual/group type, homomorphic and dysmorphic, which in some way guarantee the possibility of a mental activity that favours evolutionary and growth processes, in short.

SM: If I may insert a small note, I would refer in particular to the book *Gruppi omogenei* [*Homogeneous groups. Theory and clinic of the homogeneous mental field*, edited by S. Marinelli, S. Corbella and R. Girelli, 2004, Borla] that was published over the years and then, alas, we were not able to replicate it with *Gruppi omogenei 2* (*Homogeneous groups 2*). Perhaps .. because we have always seen, for example in cinema and literature, that replays are never original ... But in short, we promised ourselves and we have not yet done so. But, I would refer back to that book because in the end it remained a fairly synthesising text of our research. To add just this: that, on the one hand, group homogeneity can be defined on a superficial basis, of surface diagnosis; and on the other hand, one can speak of homogeneity as a category, on the other hand, deep. Livio Comin spoke of a phasic homogeneity, that is, phases during which a group elaborates what in the dual relationship is called symbiosis and which in the group can be called fusionality or, indeed, deep homogeneity. So perhaps this small clarification from the book helps to make a general synthesis, of what we can understand as a homogeneity of composition, of surface, or a homogeneity as a deep state of mind in the group: for example in a certain phase, or during the founding phases. Hence in the book there is much study on how useful this is precisely in the nascent phases of a group both as a stimulus for mirroring activities, for identification, for the development of feelings of solidarity, above all for the identification processes of the group participants with each other; and how much this [deep homogeneous state] can also create a field, for example, that is more delimited and impermeable to the outside or, instead, more permeable and inclined not to separate itself too much from what is different. Or, to quote Paolo Cruciani, that thing he used to say: what is the counterfield in the end? It is the one whereby when everyone in a group feels equal or is felt to be equal then they want to be very special, very united and strong and, in reality, however, feeling united strong homogeneous and equal to each other is not good and the desire and the ability to look for differences is stimulated. So perhaps these three polarities in the book in this sense are to be added to the beautiful presentation that Lilli made.

SC: I think your reference to the book is very important, Stefania. The interest in homogeneous groups had arisen, at least within the APG, because it was the institutions that were asking above all for homogeneous groups. And this was also the reason why Maurizio [Salis], who is not present this

evening, had stimulated the members of ASVEGRA [Associazione Veneta per la Ricerca e la Formazione in Psicoterapia Analitica di Gruppo e Analisi Istituzionale], who all came from institutional environments, to work on homogeneous groups, which were considered such because they shared a specific treatment project relating to a particular problem. The founding members of ASVEGRA were all psychiatric primary caregivers, and thus worked in institutions, unlike the APG whose participants dealt mainly with private groups. The homogeneity of the groups in institutions arose from the fact that often patients, who were no longer hospitalised, would return to address a specific issue, e.g. emancipation from the family, from parental figures.... Listening with interest to what you were saying, I noticed how, in homogeneous groups, the becoming is often towards what, as Lilli recalled, is a movement of individuation, a way of not flattening oneself in homogeneity and rediscovering one's own personal history, one's own subjectivity. This type of group needs to be time-limited, because the end of the work brings the participant back to his own singularity, the individual to his own history. On the contrary, in the non-homogeneous group, at the end of one's therapeutic journey, everyone has become aware that nothing human is foreign to them. This is very interesting. I remember that in The homogeneous groups I had entitled one of my interventions 'The modulation of the we', precisely to highlight how the modulation of the we in the homogeneous groups started from an us in order to become an I, in a constructive sense, while in the analytically oriented groups, not initiated as homogeneous, one started from an I in order to become a we. We had discussed this a little in the course of time and in The Homogeneous Groups we had highlighted the articulation of these aspects. I thought it was important to remember that.

SM: The importance of being compact and united, of being all the same must be a strength...

SC: And then, from this strength, to be a strong self, because of having shared.

AD: I notice that there is really a dialogue between areas of similarity and areas of difference and it is extremely fertile then the debate that develops from the contact between these two absolutely complementary visions. I was thinking at this point of asking you for an insight into clinical activities, into the fields of application of the homogeneous group, so into the different contexts where the homogeneous group can be used. And if, perhaps, you can think of experiences or extracts of clinical experiences in relation to the homogeneous group. I think it could be a very interesting contribution.

SC: Adelina, I would point out that, as I have already said, institutions almost always require a homogeneous group which is often proposed to the patient as part of a treatment package, which is very different from a non-institutionalised situation. In private practice the analyst usually proposes an analytically oriented group not characterised by homogeneity. Conversely in institutions, I happened to supervise very different homogeneous groups, which could have very differentiated durations. I am sorry that Maurizio [Salis] is not here this evening, because it would have been important to remember with him how Franco Fasolo, and also the other early members of ASVEGRA, often did groups with people who were no longer hospitalised, in which the participants were brought together to deal with specific themes. It should be remembered that these groups were fixed-term groups, where someone could resume group work after suspension. Let me clarify. The leader could decide that a group on a specific theme would last one year, then the group would be suspended for two months, and thereafter the group would be resumed at times on a different theme. In individual interviews with each participant, a review of his or her situation was made in order to decide whether or not it was appropriate for him or her to continue the group experience, or whether he or she had finished, at least for the time being. There was always some group participant who was 'suspended' at the time and who was advised to continue. This allowed the value of the group as an instrument, as a setting that had value and gave value, to remain in history and to be narrated, when the work resumed, to the new members, who in this way participated in a shared experience of which some were spokesmen. It seems right to recall this specific element of continuity of the value of the group setting, in the discontinuity of the participants. This way of using the group in institutions characterised the members of Asvegra, of which Maurizio is a representative, but it was then taken up within Coirag by many colleagues who used this type of homogeneous groups on a temporary basis. I also happened to supervise situations where the homogeneous group meetings were very limited and were on a specific topic. For example, I remember groups of heart patients in which some members had already undergone a heart operation while others had yet to undergo one. Being able to talk to each other, express fears and hopes, look at the present to the past and the future was very helpful, even though there were only five meetings in the group for each participant. In this case, homogeneity was instrumental in reassuring and instilling hope.

SM: I would add a small note, and then I would definitely leave the floor to everyone else - in particular then there's Simonetta on the subject of the group of teenagers, which is homogeneous by definition. A small note that can be summarised like this: in the homogeneous group it is possible that the setting, which is almost, let's say, applicative, that is, there is an 'added'

category, and it is homogeneous - so we have a group, let's say, with an object of mediation that is the homogeneity of the group precisely, that is, its composition or the expectations that derive from it for the patients, for the analyst... So, is it possible to think that an analytic function develops having started with an application, that is, with an action? - we have brought together patients not according to a concatenation of thoughts and evaluations necessary to create a group field with those individuals who will correspond within it, - but we have created a homogeneous group because all are, let us say, anorexics, or all are couples who have divorced, or all are menopausal women or all are something else. So this is a very interesting thing that I think Lilli and Simonetta in particular have something to say about. That is to say, is it possible for a not only educational, rehabilitative function to develop in a group that is just a term group? Or, that is, even when a group is focal and at term, then later resumes, for example: is it possible to maintain the spark of the analytic function? Or do these actions disturb the possibility and continuity that there is analytic work with a setting that has been, let's say, acted upon as specific, specialised, that is, homogenous? This was one of the central questions we asked ourselves in the book and two or three important colleagues and authors on this issue had answered it. So I propose that our conversation include this question.

SB: So, if I may, here, intrude on the discussion, this is something that stimulates me a lot because, as colleagues know, I have, in any case, worked primarily in institutions and health institutions in general. In the sense that I worked in a hospital where I carried out psychiatric and psychological counselling in the medical and surgical wards of the hospital, at San Filippo Neri in Rome, and then, as Stefania was saying, in a service of the same ASL dedicated specifically to adolescents, so, if you like, a single-issue service. First of all, also to answer the question Nadia asked earlier, in the institutions, in my experience I think I can say that the group in general, for various reasons, and the single-issue group in particular, seems to me to be a privileged instrument of intervention, that is. I would divide the intervention in the medical field in the strictest sense, which is a characteristic of the Roman group, because there have also been some interventions related to the hospital, to Argo, from what can be an intervention made, for example, in an institution belonging to the Department of Mental Health with adolescents. Here, in particular, as regards the needs, the needs expressed within, collected within the hospital work, I realised that the institution often imposes on you targeted interventions and also, if you like, rapid interventions. So, one says impossible. But I have noticed, to answer Stefania's question, that if the group is, at least as far as the way I have worked, somewhat considered as a collective mind and body, it becomes a place, a plural and even somewhat scenic extended mind. That is, it really

allows one to stage very primitive mental elements, not accessible to thought, implicit memories, procedural etc., very close to the experience of the body. And therefore, in reality, even if these groups have a limited duration - for example, I did a group with women with breast cancer that lasted three months, - in reality they allow a true crossing, an authentic experience that is then passable of recomposition, in short, of integration, here. So, to answer Stefania's question, I also think that this preconception of the analyst practically, in the constitution of a focal group, in some way is used by the group as a first hook and, in some way, and also the limited time creates a sort of accelerated precipitation of traumatic elements, of traumatic themes, that are in the field and, in reality, therefore allows a very intense experience even if brief, here. And that's one thing that makes the use of this kind of group in my opinion extremely functional.

SM: I interrupt you to augment what you're saying, which is of great interest. You used a lot of adjectives and adverbs that are related to time: 'acceleration, faster'... So I was thinking that it seems that in your discourse the homogeneous group increases what is already a characteristic of group psychoanalysis and group psychotherapy, that is, that there is a temporal acceleration with respect to, say, individual analysis. So it seems that because of its composition, because of the type of activity, because of the way - as you said - it was conceived, the homogeneous group increases this aspect of precipitation of the elements and the main nuclei of the psychic activity of that group.

SB: Yes, that was my experience. I also wanted to put in a thought that I have had for some time, but which came to me, let's say, just as I was trying to prepare for this meeting, and that is that this type of group is particularly useful in all events and conditions that concern the body. That is, events concerning times when the body either physiologically or pathologically, let's say, comes to the fore. Physiologically, all the transitions of age passages: adolescence, women passing through middle age, for women in particular motherhood, etc. Pathologically, all important pathologies obviously or that affect functionality, have functional impairment residues, thus creating a need for recognition, new recognition, new integration with a body other than the one we consider to be ourselves, that is. In my opinion there is a specific anguish, this is something I think I had spoken to Stefania about some time ago, which I also found for example in adolescents, so in an absolutely physiological condition. That is, in my opinion, what touches changes in the body provokes anxieties of annihilation, of death, which have their own specificity, because they directly touch the foundation of the self.

SM: But why would the group help the elaboration of these kinds of anxieties as well as making them appear? Because you spoke of a scenic function that seemed very beautiful to me.

SB: Because this aspect, in my opinion, plural is precisely a scenic possibility of possible dramatisation, of collective sharing, of mind and enlarged container that, if held by the analyst, becomes at that point a reliable container, quite reliable, different from the individual mind and the dual relationship...

SM: Thank you for that clarity!

SB: Yes, it is different, I think. Not worse or better, but different. In my opinion, in the meantime it allows the possibility of depositing traumatic aspects in an acted way without this destroying the setting, acted with the body or in the body, because if one does not go to the session the group continues to live, so to speak. So, important unconscious acting out.

SC: Sorry to interrupt you, but I find what you're saying very interesting, because it really answers the question of whether there is still an analytic perspective and how it is expressed by the conductor, and both you, Simonetta, and Stefania, have said that the group is an accelerator. I think the theme of using time in a different way, in homogeneous groups, is very important, precisely because the analyst, while maintaining an analytical point of view, takes the responsibility, depending on the group he is going to lead and depending on the focus that the group proposes, to accelerate some dynamics with respect to others. In a non-homogeneous open-ended group, the analyst, depending on the dynamics that arise and the 'emergencies', can instead slow down and create space for reflection with respect to the participants' haste to get out of difficult situations. On the other hand, in a homogeneous group with a specific focus, the analyst rightly allows himself to speed up the solution with respect to what is proposed, whereas in the classic non-homogeneous analytic group there is no focus, other than taking care of the analytic process. And it is precisely because of this diversity that the analyst, even if he observes the same dynamics, uses them differently depending on whether the group is homogeneous, has a specific time and a specific focus, or whether it is an analytically oriented group where there are those who begin at some moments and end at others.

SM: I am reminded of a quotation from Freud of the severe obsessive patient who never recovered and who became more and more obsessive in analysis and then when he [Freud] says: I put, at a certain point, for such and such a reason a limit, he said, let's say, in a year from the beginning of the analysis

and then Freud's note is this: in that year the work of analysis grew at such a speed that all the things that had not been combined in the long previous years were combined. So I was thinking about the analytical value of this action that lies in giving, for example, the focus of a group.

SB: I was thinking of Luigi Esposito who used to do groups with drug addicted patients and did time contracts, of a year or less, because a drug addicted patient runs the risk of analysis becoming a substitute dummy, and so I remember it struck me, because it was a chat many years ago. Anyway I wanted to say one more thing in response to Stefania, if I may. This aspect of why, of what it is that heals, that is more easily deposited, even perhaps more quickly, within a group, that is to say of these elements that are traumatising and that have never had access to thought. I am very fond of a more lateral aspect of Bion's thought, who said that the sphere of action of protomental phenomena is the collective or the group even if the symptoms develop in the individual. That he gave the protomental this border zone where the psychic and the biological, the mental and the biological, are at an undifferentiated level, and where the group saw it as a process that passed from the crossing of these unthinkable experiences then acted out in the group to the possibility of developing actions and thought. I wanted to give some examples thinking of groups I have done. For example, a group of women with breast cancer that lasted three months. In the first sessions they were inundated with death anxiety and the absences were significant. The group consisted of three young and three older women. There was an interesting symmetry and duplicity: there were always two young and two old, two in-patients and two out-patients. Once two patients came in with the same name. I thought of the breast, which is symmetrical. The group acted an unthinkable representation. At first the patients would uncover their breasts, show them, grope them. This is a disruptive fact that the group can collect and think about. Dream gathering restores emotionality to thought. Also the experience of a group of adolescents, which particularly impressed me because even there the main feature was the repeated absence of some, in turn. Yet the group was alive because when they were present, they brought very important dreams, which were deposited. Then they did not come the following session. It was a group conducted in an institution. With the co-leader we thought that the group did not take off, until we were able to give meaning to these behaviours: it was difficult to be there because it was difficult to be. The message thus acted, gave a fundamental communication because the group worked. It existed. Also in this group, the body was the message of deep anxieties: adolescence is a period of life or death.

SC: Nadia, I would like to ask you for a contribution with respect to an analytical perspective that in certain homogeneous groups requires an

analyst's attitude different from that of the more classic analytical group, in that it has a pre-established focus. I am thinking for example of the Group on the Recovery of Functions according to Carlo Zucca's model...

NF: I was just thinking about this model while listening to my colleagues. Especially Simonetta's expositive part made me think of the work with drug-addicted patients. Because the discourse concerning the body and the poignancy of the body that becomes the full, authentic interpreter of anxieties and experiences, in the work of the recovery of functions or the activation of functions of the self that had not found a possibility to develop and integrate, was a term group and we worked exactly on the relationship between the body tortured by drug addiction and the absolute limit that the patient experienced in an acted and mortifying way on the body. There was no possibility of thinking and symbolising. Speaking of mirroring, I simultaneously followed the group of drug-addicted parents designed to help them understand that the loneliness they felt, the isolation in which they found themselves tended in fact to represent, by reiterating it, the same closure of the mind in which their drug-addicted children found themselves. The dynamism of the group was in close connection with the dynamism of the group of drug-addicted patients. There was a dynamic flow given by the mirroring of the mental movements of the two groups. And they were groups that lasted only a year. What Simonetta said resonated a lot within me because I felt the aching body that is the interpreter of a suffering mind. On the other hand, it occurs to me that psychoanalysis too often continues to forget the body: it forgets that if we did not have a body we would not have a mind. I realise this may sound like a banal statement, but perhaps we would have no chance of having a healthy body if we did not have a mind capable of understanding what is going on inside us and why.

SM: I would also like to bring the experiences with anorexic and bulimic patients closer to the clinical notes and indications, to say that this passage from concreteness to a symbolising narrative is a passage favoured by both the group and the homogenous group. Because the latter is born in the light of common elements, a single mind-body agglutinated to one another. The homogeneous group's fields of action when it concerns the body are therefore very much the same.

NF: This consideration of yours allows me to ask those of you who have thought of it, what the possibilities of a representation that passes from a representational capacity of the mind might be, and I ask this opening between Argo and Art. What was the element that made you think of this?

SM: There was a strong presence of Paolo Valerio because he brings [to Argo's site: *Creatività Inconscio Opere*] a powerful corporeity and a psychoanalytic and artistic mind, precisely thanks to his works and artistic objects, this impossible encounter of body and mind, in anguish. His works are made of found objects that he recombines, objects and works that speak of desolation and the endless cycle of life and death. Silvia and I found ourselves in dialogue with Paolo first. It was overwhelming and drew in many other thoughts, for example, immediately afterwards we included the beautiful essay on Winnicott, Campora's essay on creativity; and then we moved on to music, and adolescence with listening to and producing music in groups. Recently there was Marisa Pelella Melega, a Brazilian author, who will bring her work on poetic creativity and the birth of the symbolic mind identified through psychoanalysis. By creativity we mean creativity that is also analytical.

AD: I would like to ask, in the light of these important reflections on the various disciplines, what is the relationship between the Argo Onlus Association with other organisations and magazines, in particular with *Funzione Gamma*?

SC: I can tell you about the very creative exchange between Argo and other magazines, first with the Argonauts and then with Polaris. An extremely stimulating link and dialogue has been built. And then the relationship with *Funzione Gamma*, which Stefania can talk more about, is important...

SM: I thought I would add something. Argo's links are many, Simonetta for example can then tell us about the link with the ARPAD association of teenagers. But I wanted to mention that we have linked from time to time depending on the topics, depending on the articles and conferences with the most diverse situations. Last time, for example, we connected with Gneccchi and Rusconi's Emergency Association, with Be-Free women's association on the topic of violence. In short, there are no prejudices, but there is research, contact, without remaining in a sectoral field. The institutions with which we have connected are many, such as the ABA, Morelli's *Bastions*, DAI eating disorders, in institutions, in short, all those situations in which associationism shows difficult materials of a population difficult for the psychoanalyst to approach. Then ARPAD in particular, which is a formalised association of great quality. We were very happy with Simonetta to also think about the edition conducted with Maurizio, Silvia and Laura Ballotin who greatly enhanced the contact with ARPAD by making it operational and Simonetta can tell us about it.

SB: Yes, in fact this last experience allowed us to get involved in an issue written by several hands on adolescence. Arpad has a great deal of experience of adolescence even if not from a psychoanalytic point of view. Our more clinical work allowed for a true, even affectionate, collaboration. Interesting relationships were forged on the basis of common work. There were exchanges on our and their sites. A very fruitful contribution.

SM: I am sorry that Bencivenga is missing from this exchange today. She has also managed to create strong links with, for example, COVID operators. That is another important dimension.

SB: I was thinking, on the basis of what Madia said earlier about the experience of the two groups with drug addicts and parents, about the groups I conducted with oncology patients and the groups conducted by Stefania with oncology workers. We had found some very interesting similarities, as Nadia said about her experience. This is to say another element of very dense, very rich encounters.

SM: I was thinking that we can now do a "Homogeneous Group 2" related to the body. That emerges clearly tonight and we are grateful to Simonetta and Lilli and their clarity of exposition.

LR: I start from Stefania's question if there can be an analytical function in the homogeneous group. So thinking back to my first groups, in addition to those held at university, I held a women's group in Reggio Calabria for seven years, within a Yoga Institute. This group had the same cadence as the experiential groups because it was held for ten meetings once a month on a theme. Each year we would choose a theme around which to talk, such as trauma, awareness, identity, etc., and I used the artistic image as a mediating object. I can say that in both cases the analytical function took place. In both cases they were groups that did not have a specific therapeutic purpose because they arose without a demand for treatment, but allowed the participants to work on important themes and the element of homogeneity favoured dramatisation, bringing out and condensing the themes of the deep fantasy that was then represented in various ways. In the case of the experiential group at university, I remember, the group's unconscious fantasy was acted out through the body. A Bionian assumption of coupling was acted out through the body, which ended, for a participant who had suffered major traumas such as the loss of a granddaughter and a major anorexic disorder, with the announcement of the birth of a "saviour" - in a nutshell: that is, she announced to the group during a meeting that she was expecting a child. This person also recounted in the concluding paper this experience of growth as,

and I too remember it being so, it was her own personal growth but also that of the whole group.

As for these ladies, each year the participants tackled themes that were narrated through the choice of an image. The element of homogeneity emerged through the representation of a 'model scene' with the mediation of the art object and important physical or identity traumas were relived. I had to be very careful not to give space to unmanageable situations in a limited time, yet this work made it possible to address and heal difficult situations, pains that could not otherwise be narrated. I then wanted to latch on to the art section to say that the artistic representations that will now be present in the art section, which will be different, to emphasise that each artistic representation does not just represent something the author wants to tell us, but is the bearer of group and social content. In this sense, therefore, it can act as a mediating object to generate model scenes that groups and individuals can work on.

SM: I would add that the art of this new container dedicated to the creativity of bringing the group to life is Silvia who possesses it! The art of bringing the group to life ... then for communication there's Adelina and Nadia who managed to tell us a complex story in a short time and whom I thank. Simonetta gave us this thing of the body that we want to keep as a pearl. Lilli then reminded me, regarding the analytic function, of what Bolognini said (at the time of the lock down): the analytic function is now a field tent, which we move and travel with when necessary.

NF: I think that's exactly right Stefania. I really like this image of the field tent. I think Lilli and Simonetta really made it clear to us that it is our analytically oriented mind that allows us to work with clinical groups, with time-limited groups, with focus groups. And whatnot. It is the analyst who carries within him/herself this field tent that is the commitment we make to be profoundly analytic in the way we read and in the way we position ourselves as trainers, therapists, supervisors, in all the functions that involve us professionally the analytic mind is diriment. It allows us to be creative in our reading of phenomena.

AD: Thank you all, it was very interesting this exchange.

SC: I would like to thank everyone for the intense and stimulating exchange today and congratulate Stefania who, with her liveliness and creativity, has always kept the interest and vitality of the group high. Tonight I realised that we have done many things. Stefania sowed and exchanged projects and made us grow.

NF: I think that *ARGO* and *Funzione Gamma*, and I want to take up with pleasure and affection Claudio Neri and his latest book, is a demonstration of how far psychoanalysis is capable of going. We always rightly refer to our masters. But it is truly incredible how thought is constantly renewing itself and formulating new theories. Stefania said something about Claudio Neri at the beginning that I deeply agree with, and that is that Claudio is the person who has been most capable of proposing a truly eclectic thought in the deepest and most integrated sense of the term. At the same time offering us many tools for ever further understanding. Moreover, the things I have read about *Funzione Gamma* and *Argo* over the years go in this same direction. And I like to testify to that because I have very recently joined this Association and I am happy about that too.

SM: We are happy because we have someone coming from a later generation who has made us see new perspectives compared to what we were used to. Thank you and Adelina.

SC: I would add, again to quote Claudio, that there was a good sociability in our group tonight.

SB: I would like to say that Stefania's idea about the second homogeneous group on the body is very interesting. I have another idea to think about is about dreams. This presence of the body in the initial phase of a group appears in dreams because they have a sensorial characterisation, for me it is very interesting. It is like the difference between the persecutory delirium which is a structured delirium of the psychotic and some of the delusions of the disorganised schizophrenias which are delusions about the body liquefying, burning....

SC: To return to talking about the body at a time when work and groups are done a little bit remotely and a little bit in presence... is very important. We have to resume the relationship with the body, the dreams of this period also tell us that.

NF: I would like to add something to what Simonetta was saying. I think that many dreams in which the body becomes the protagonist of the dream have to do with the state of the patient's self. Situations in which "cataclysmic" changes occur signal the questioning of the patient who has to "decide" whether he wants to make the leap or not. These dreams appear to be psychotic dreams, but they are not and you can tell this by the patient's elaborative capacity in narration and associative capacity that can allow a real co-construction of meaning with the therapist.

SB: I am reminded of this phrase by Bion when he said that one should pay attention to the suffering of the social group in epidemics....

SM: Can we close with a greeting to all.



ARGO Associazione per la Ricerca sul Gruppo Omogeneo
la Rivista, Gruppo: Omogeneità e differenze

Group Psychoanalysis: 50 years of work report

Funzione Gamma, rivista telematica scientifica dell'Università "Sapienza" di Roma, registrata presso il Tribunale Civile di Roma (n. 426 del 28/10/2004)– www.funzionegamma.it