



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

*Psicoanalisi di gruppo: Reso-conto di 50 anni di lavoro*



**Group Liaison Function**  
**Interview with Stefano Carrara**  
on the 'Psychoanalysis and Method' experience

Edited by ***Stefania Marinelli***

**1. Question by Stefania Marinelli**

Stefano you are among the few people in the psychiatric and psychoanalytic field who have gone through two training matrices, one Gruppist and Bionian, with the IIPG. The other Jungian, with the AIPA. Is there anything you can tell us about the reasons and saliences of this articulated path of yours?

**1. Reply by Stefano Carrara**

As far as the training courses I undertook, and the reasons that prompted me, it is necessary to go back many years, during my specialisation in psychiatry; I graduated in Medicine in 1972 and in that same year I began my specialisation at the Pisa Psychiatric Clinic - an institution that at the time (but also subsequently, only in recent years there seems to have been a little

softening on this level...) was very distant, when not hostile, to psychoanalytic culture. Fifty years have passed since then, half a century, an enormity...this question of yours brings back many memories, good and bad; on the other hand, in our field we cannot exempt ourselves, we know, after Jung, that each of our formulations or reconstructions is linked to the 'personal equation' and that in it affectivity plays a prominent role. It seems important to me to contextualise my answer, and I apologise if it will take some time.

I was born a psychiatrist, and as such I worked in the National Health Service as a hospital doctor for an initial period at the aforementioned Psychiatric Clinic - where for a few years I also carried out research in the field of clinical psychopharmacology - and then, until my retirement, in the territorial services under the various names they have taken on (psychiatry, mental hygiene, mental health), increasingly inserting myself over time in a conception of psychiatry strongly oriented in a psychotherapeutic sense, particularly psychodynamic.

In 1972, when I approached the world of psychiatry, the law on 'Psychiatric Assistance' of 1904 was still in force in Italy (albeit with the amendments of 1968) still centred on the Psychiatric Hospital; and on the other hand, the experiences of institutional transformation initiated by Basaglia in the Gorizia asylum and then in Trieste, by Jervis (after Gorizia) in Reggio Emilia in the area, by Pirella in Arezzo, and many others, had already been active for some time. There were then very varied ferments and drives, with strong links to the legacy of the '68 movement and with dialectics that were also very much alive within the 'psy' world in the opposition to the old paradigms and in the search for new possibilities to give health responses to mental suffering. The psychiatric reform law (law 180/78) was promulgated in a hurry in 1978, prompted by the possibility of a referendum requested by radicals to abrogate the 1904 law, the positive outcome of which would have removed any normative reference in this field - and to this haste were then blamed some shortcomings that did not allow the best possible application of the law. The young psychiatrists and postgraduates (who, I would remind you, were not paid as such at the time, and made do financially with substitutions, on-call duty in private clinics, scholarships, and the luckiest were able to enter hospital services) - and also the young psychologists, but there were many fewer of them then - found themselves working mostly in structures linked to the old methods, but which, subsequently also under the impetus of the new law, had to renew themselves in some way. Even the most conservative institutions, such as the Psychiatric Clinic, where I worked as a hospital assistant during my specialisation, had been touched by innovative ferment. I say lapped, because there was a small group, of which I was a member, of young assistants, postgraduates, researchers, scholarship holders, etc., who were sensitive to renewal, highly motivated even if a little confused, but above all lacking in real power, who were unable to carve out for themselves an

adequate operational, training and cultural space, so things remained unchanged - we all left this institution in the course of time.

At that time, however, the young psychiatrists - and psychologists - oriented towards the psychotherapeutic approach in the broad sense, and psychoanalysis in particular, in our area, western Tuscany (in Florence, for example, the situation was already a little different) were as if squeezed between a traditional psychiatric approach linked to the University - organicist and pharmacological - and an approach linked to the reform movement and the recently born *Psichiatria Democratica*, which to define socio-psychiatric is reductive. It had strong political connotations (sometimes even in the less lofty sense of the term), on many occasions a very ideological imprint, and an ill-concealed if not explicit distrust of psychoanalytic culture and psychotherapeutic practices that were relegated, in an often disqualifying manner, to a role of 'techniques'.

Many of us young psychiatrists and psychologists, dissatisfied both with 'traditional' psychiatry and with the answers given by the reform movement to the problem of psychic suffering, and theoretically oriented towards the psychoanalytic approach, decided to undertake personal analyses with analysts from Freudian or Jungian institutions, with the aim - besides that of healing our own wounds that, we were aware, had directed us towards psychiatry - of better carrying out our work as psychiatrists, of which the psychotherapeutic (or not...) component inherent to every interaction with the psychiatrists was evident. ) inherent in any interaction with the patient. We had as our models above all those analysts who devoted themselves to the therapy of psychotics, engaging 'in the field' of psychiatry and confronting with psychoanalytic tools that 'madness' that we, with our scarce resources but full of 'romantic ardour', tried to combat every day in the wards and outpatient clinics. Naturally strong was the idealisation, of a psychoanalyst-psychiatrist 'father' as a 'good breast' opposed, in splitting, to a 'bad' institutional psychiatry. In some, as in my case, the motivation for formalised institutional analytical training developed but only later. After deciding to carry out a personal analysis, I had several discussions with analysts who for various reasons seemed to me to adhere to the above-mentioned model, until an agreement was reached with Giuseppe Maffei, by the way the best known in our area. Although I had a slight preference for the Jungian approach, I did not consider it diriment. In my opinion, the fact that Jungian associations, unlike Freudian ones, did not require inclusion in a didactic-assessment pathway from before the personal analysis, left much more room for freedom and the possibility of choice, without falling into institutional dynamics.

It was only after the conclusion of my personal analysis that I decided to undertake the AIPA (Italian Association of Analytical Psychology) training pathway to become an 'analyst psychologist' (the official denomination of the

profession, born from Jung's decision to rename his version of psychoanalysis - after the break with Freud - 'analytical psychology'; some, like Maffei did, prefer the term 'Jungian psychoanalyst') internationally recognised by the IAAP. It should be borne in mind that at the time I am talking about, the Ossicini law that regulated the psychotherapeutic profession in 1989 had not yet come into force, with many debates and controversies particularly on the assimilation of analytical activities to those psychotherapeutic activities regulated by law.

During my personal analysis I had also undertaken, with some colleagues, parallel training courses in systemic-family therapy, including in Milan with Boscolo and Cecchin of Selvini Palazzoli's group, and in Rome in Loredi's group. These were experiences that did not lead me to the completion of institutional training, for which I then opted for AIPA. Even though I only sporadically used systemic-relational training on the clinical level, I believe that it nonetheless allowed me to broaden my field of vision and contributed to the 'pluralist' orientation that I will discuss with regard to the Lucca group. My training in the 'gruppongological' field was much later. I had always felt a training gap in this field, and around 2003 I had the opportunity to participate in an experiential group that Maria Bruna Dorliguzzo had set up in Pisa - which was then the nucleus of the current CRPG in Pisa. The experiential group was followed by a training course (two-year course) for already 'certified' psychotherapists, with teachers and supervisors from the IIPG, organised by the IIPG itself in collaboration with the Pisa ASL. Before retiring, I had the time to hold, in co-therapy with a fellow SPI Freudian psychoanalyst who had done the two-year course with me, a therapeutic group within the Mental Health Service where we worked. It was a very interesting experience, in which we also found, among others, all the issues relating to institutional dynamics in relation to psychotherapeutic activity, particularly group therapy, widely described in the literature. Unfortunately, I could not continue because my request to continue this activity after retirement, as social voluntary work (without any financial return whatsoever), was not accepted by the management.

For me, the reference to Bion was not linked to this type of training, because it was already present, I would say, from the very beginning of my path with AIPA, when I approached what even then seemed to me obvious areas of consonance with Jung. The IIPG training allowed me to deepen the reference to Bion also on a theoretical level and stimulated the search for the Bion-Jung comparison, which is also the origin of the issue of Funzione Gamma that you mentioned, which is coming out these days. Within the CRPG in Pisa - of which I am one of the founding members - I must say that I have found a group reality that is open to comparison and rather free from school or institutional 'orthodoxies'; in this I partly anticipate the answer to your question on 'transitions' in and between groups. In the group dedicated to the

reading of Bion's works, held monthly before the seminar with external speakers, I had on several occasions made interventions pointing out the similarity of various Bion's thoughts to Jung's. The then Scientific Secretary, Maria Bruna Dorliguzzo, took the cue to propose a CRPG seminar precisely on the Bion-Jung theme, which was done the following year and which also constituted a starting point for the FG issue in question. To give another example, again within the CRPG in Pisa in a few days' time a seminar will be devoted to the figure of Giuseppe Maffei, who died the same year, and to his legacy. In this case, in addition to the fact that Maffei was well known in our area, there was an articulation between the CRPG and our group in Lucca, due to the presence in the CRPG of some of the Lucca group, as well as myself. This was also the case for a seminar recently held on John Hautmann, to whom the Florence Psychoanalytic Centre (of the SPI) was recently dedicated. I believe that a characteristic of the Pisa CRPG with respect to the other CRPGs is its independence from the IIPG training school, in the sense that Pisa is not the seat of an IIPG school - with the relative institutional dynamics proper to any training school - and above all that its members do not come, for the most part, primarily from IIPG training, but, as is also my case, from other paths. This in my opinion makes the members, and the institution itself, much more 'free' and facilitates 'transitions' with other groups.

## **2) Question by Stefania Marinelli**

You are also a member of the cultural and intercultural psychoanalytic research group Psychoanalysis and Method founded by Maffei in his city of Lucca. Perhaps even if on the discursive and limited occasion given by this historical edition on psychoanalytic groups, you can tell us some of your thoughts on the important function of connection between groups that the psychoanalytic group can play?

## **2) Answer by Stefano Carrara**

I will briefly introduce the Lucca group. It is currently configured as the Cultural and Scientific Association 'Materiali per il Piacere della Psicoanalisi' (Materials for the Pleasure of Psychoanalysis) and publishes the annual journal Psicoanalisi e Metodo. It was born around and through the work of Giuseppe Maffei, and it seems necessary to first outline his figure. Maffei was born in Lucca in 1935, a doctor specialised in Nervous and Mental Illnesses and in Child Neuropsychiatry in Pisa, a free lecturer in Psychiatry in 1967. He had been a pupil of Ernst Bernhard, then had done a Jungian personal analysis, and had joined AIPA in which he had very early training functions; from this role he had resigned after many years with a decision that was

considered 'radical' and that was taken with the aim of creating a critical reflection on the 1989 Ossicini law that regulated psychotherapy. He was for many years a member of the editorial board of *Rivista di Psicologia Analitica*, the oldest Jungian publication in Italy. His relationship with Jung's thought has always been particularly dialectical and lively: he shunned hypostatisations and was always confronted with the developments of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis, frequenting scholars of great clinical and theoretical importance and giving rise to important reflections and debates on the theme of 'pluralism in psychoanalysis', which would later become one of our group's main *raison d'être*. This research also led him to carry out a second personal analysis with Ignacio Matte Blanco, who had moved permanently to Rome in 1966. Maffei was an analyst who, while always maintaining a free-professional role, was deeply involved in the use of psychoanalysis in public health facilities, through consultancies for them - the most important of which was the one held for several decades at the NPI Service of the Pisa Hospital. "Maffei was a constant and active presence in the quest to create a place where it was possible to use a language common to the variety of professions, cultural settings and experiences, a common language in which to get to know each other and find each other" (Giulia Del Carlo Giannini, for many years Director of the Service). He was also a university lecturer as a contract professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Medicine (specialisation in Psychiatry and degree in Psychology) of the University of Pisa.

In the second half of the 1970s, Maffei, together with three other analysts working in public facilities in Pisa, set up the 'Gruppo 77', which was configured as a place for exchange and discussion on the problems then emerging in the field of mental health, with theoretical references to social psychiatry, phenomenology and psychoanalysis. This was a nucleus of aggregation around which various colleagues, analysts of various backgrounds, psychiatrists, psychologists were progressively added, and from it arose initiatives open to a broader public of clinicians and scholars in our area; among them the foundation in 1983 of the journal *Materiali per il piacere della psicoanalisi* (since 2001 *Psicoanalisi e Metodo*) and the institution in 1984 of the Annual Conference on Psychoanalysis in Lucca, which last year reached its XXXII edition. It constitutes a meeting project open to the development of a dialogue between the various scientific and humanistic disciplines, and psychoanalysis - in its broadest sense. Maffei was an indefatigable seeker of contacts with Italian and foreign analysts of various educational and cultural 'affiliations', whose ideas he appreciated, in order to deepen and compare - always looking, however, more at the substance of the comparison than at the reputation of the name, even if often very high. This climate of open and unprejudiced confrontation, cultivated by him with great passion, intellectual honesty, love of knowledge and indefatigable ability to

work, was mostly appreciated by the invited speakers who came out of these study days claiming to have received valuable 'nourishment' (both in K and in O, I would venture in Bionian terms). One of the main aspects of this climate at the conferences was in my view the absolute 'secularity' with respect to aspects of 'schools' and 'associations' with their intertwining institutional roles and interpersonal dynamics; I do not think I am exaggerating in describing it as the opposite of that described by Bion, with typical British humour, in 'Cogitations, p. 305 (the one beginning with the words "Much of the analytic controversy is not a controversy at all..."). This 'secularity' was also expressed in the absolute rejection, in the organisation of the conferences, of sponsorship related to health aspects (read: pharmaceutical companies), an attitude not very frequent in our country. I realise that I have used a past tense; but the hope, and the commitment of our group, is that his way of being and his teaching will continue to psychically enliven both us, who consider ourselves his pupils - it has been said, because of his modesty and understatement, that Maffei "...was a master in spite of himself" - and the guests of our group at conferences and seminars, or the readers of the journal.

And here we come to the subject of the analytical group, in this case a group of fellow analysts around a figure - I think I am quite objective in this assessment - who stands out many measures above the others. Undoubtedly there were prerequisites for a situation of dependency to arise, also in view of the fact that many members of the group had, at some time, analysed or supervised with him. My impression is that Maffei, but then also the group itself, took great care to ensure that the group function was activated under all circumstances, albeit with an awareness of the existing gap. In any case, years passed between the end of an analysis with him and eventual entry into the group; there was also the rule of unanimity, in the sense that it was enough for one member to be against an entry for whatever reason to prevent it. Several groups were active at the same time, with large areas of overlap between the members: a theoretical study group, a clinical intervision group, an editorial group that dealt with the journal and the preparation of the annual conference (a structure that continues more or less unchanged). In each of these groups there have been new additions and defections, and they have changed a great deal over the course of time, although they remain a fairly consistent core group.

Maffei never had 'teacher', 'guru', 'supposed knowledge' attitudes. In his collected volume *La ricerca infinita. Uno psiconauta nel cosmo della mente*, Ed. ETS-Pisa (dedicated 'to Giuseppe Maffei on his seventieth birthday, by colleagues, students, and friends') Giuseppe Zanda (the current president of the Association), speaking of the clinical group, states: '... I think that one of the reasons for this unusual duration [since 1979] lies in the position assumed by Maffei within the group itself: a central position, but not higher than the

position of the others'. In the editorial of the last issue of *Psychoanalysis and Method*, the first to be published after his death in 2021, dedicated to his memory and edited by the entire editorial group, we tried to identify some aspects of his personality and analytical attitude as they emerged in our group, and I refer to it (Editorial, *Psychoanalysis and Method*, Vol. 20/ 2022). Here I would like to recall just one aspect, in my opinion particularly significant, that seems to me to characterise the analytical horizon of our group: the constant search for the 'germinative', in the clinical, or theoretical, material on which the group was dealing at the time. On each occasion, Maffei invited us at the end of each meeting to reflect on the meaning of our meetings, asking us: are we here out of habit, because we have always been here, or because we find what we do interesting, what are we looking for by coming here? With these seemingly provocative questions he stimulated the search for truth, "food for thought" as Bion put it.

We are currently continuing with the various activities in the various groups I mentioned earlier, in each of which we are processing the mourning of his passing, which seems to me to have constituted a real 'caesura' for us despite the fact that for several years, due to his long illness, his presence and participation had been increasingly reduced.

### **3. Question by Stefania Marinelli**

The issue of *Funzione Gamma* that you edited 'Bion and Jung' has just seen the light of day. I imagine that you have been able to deepen your thoughts on the value, as Bion calls them, of 'transits' (not only the attention to the object, to its spatio-temporal dimension, but above all to its boundary, its position of transit and connection). I assume that you can tell us something about the interest that the intercultural group presents if it manages to identify and bring together elements of mixed, polyvalent, polysemiotic psychic fields, which tend to escape the scholastic definitional claim that an established group might have. A psychoanalytic research group basically moves between two risks: that of stiffening its model when it has been institutionalised; and that of hybridising in the confrontation with different models. It is a complex issue. But perhaps you have thought about this aspect and can relate some of your reflections? Thank you.

### **3. Reply by Stefano Carrara**

Answering your third question is more difficult and refers to a complexity that would require a great deal of in-depth study, which I am not able to do at the moment. I will however try to set out my thoughts. I very much agree with what you say about 'transits', and about the need, on the part of the analyst, to recognise the elements in the psyche that tend to escape a scholastic

definitional pretence. The twofold risk to which you allude, of defensive hardening of models, and that of hybridisation in the confrontation with other models, has been and is the object of theoretical attention in our group, precisely because of the centrality we attribute to the theme of 'pluralism in psychoanalysis'.

I am reminded of the famous phrase attributed to Winston Churchill: 'It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, apart from all the other forms that have been tried so far'. This is how I think pluralism in psychoanalysis should be considered, a position that is all in all fragile, always in the balance and at risk of slipping into authoritarian or chaotic drifts - the 'tower of Babel' has often been cited in this regard - but nevertheless the one that can most contribute to the progress of the discipline.

As for the first risk you mention, the defensive stiffening of models, it seems to me that it may have something to do with what I have called 'authoritarian drift'. In my opinion this stiffening can take place on two levels, which are interconnected and in any case, under 'normal' conditions, usually well-functioning. The first (theoretical level) concerns the centring on the figure of the founder, an auctoritas to whom, through the reading of his writings, is entrusted the task of dispelling the doubts and questions that contact with the suffering psyche inevitably generates (think of Bion's 'Two Men Talking in a Room' and Jung's 'Psychology of the Transference'). On the second (practical level) the auctoritas manifests itself through the rules (mostly, however, sensible and effective under normal conditions) of the various training paths and career steps of the analysts, steps in which in certain circumstances (e.g. the emotional turbulence of which Bion speaks) the personological components of the various protagonists can intertwine with group and institutional dynamics that are not always clear to the interlocutors themselves, with often negative consequences on the achievement of an adequate analytical functioning. It seems to me that the multiplication in Italy of training schools for psychotherapy (in total I believe there are more than 400) as a consequence of the Ossicini law - schools that in reality are very varied in terms of experience, culture and methodological rigour - has led to an increase in the risk of this drift, which is particularly dangerous for a psychoanalytic type of training.

With regard to the second risk you envisage, the hybridisation of models, I would like to relate it to so-called 'eclecticism': because in itself a hybrid is not necessarily a negative fact, indeed it can be an element that completes and reinforces a theoretical set-up. But for there to be a vital result, it seems to me necessary that it should not be limited to the juxtaposition of concepts and operational practices, but that there should be a reference, even if implicit, to the possibility of a more general meta-theory yet to be delineated, of which those that hybridise are but partial aspects. This includes both the need for there to be no logical incompatibilities between the concepts thus related, and

for them to be the product of largely overlapping methodologies of investigation (the 'analytical method') - as well, of course, as the willingness to humbly accept one's own limitations. In the introduction to our 2010 annual conference *Is Pluralism Necessary? Reflections on similarities and diversities in the analytic field*, a movement was identified, underway in the last decades of the last century, towards a shift from monistic to pluralistic conceptions (*Psychoanalysis and Method*, vol X, 2011, p.23). I would like to conclude with a quotation from Lacanian analyst Virginio Baio who, in the volume *La ricerca infinibile. Uno psiconauta nel cosmo della mente*, cited above, emphasised the importance of "...a clear, precise and determined analytical position that shows how necessary it is for an analyst to be able to count on a community of analysts that does not identify with a signifier, but is based, uniquely, on the analytical cause".

4. **Thank you** very much for the punctuality with which you spoke of ... transits I shall call them, between groups we may say. You have drawn a broad and instructive historical picture by emphasising the function that the group can have in relating groups to each other and playing an important bridging function.

## ***Group psychoanalysis: 50 years of work report***

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