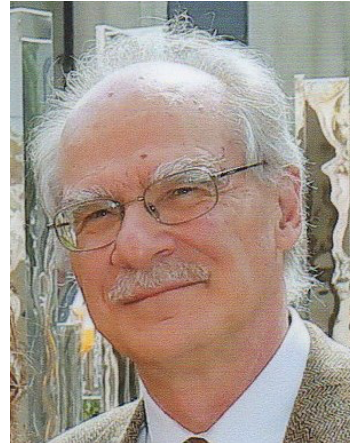




ARGO Associazione per la Ricerca sul Gruppo Omogeneo
la Rivista, Gruppo: Omogeneità e differenze

Group Psychoanalysis: Reporting on 50 Years of Work



Dialogue between Silvia Corbella and Alberto Lampignano

Corbella: When did you encounter group analysis or, as we say now, 'the analytically oriented group'? Talking about it with colleagues, in books, at a conference or in a clinical experience?

Lampignano: In those days, when I first started working in psychoanalysis, it was almost a layperson's mistake to talk about 'group analysis'. There was only one analysis, it involved the couch, etc. One had to say 'group psychotherapy' so as not to sound like an ignoramus. As for me, after a couple of individual short psychotherapies, I turned to the Milan Centre for Psychoanalysis, where Sigurtà received me, to see what to recommend. Realising that I did not have too much money, he recommended group therapy with an SPI member. I agreed and so did eight years of group psychotherapy, three times a week. The experience was fruitful and I can say that it was the most valuable one, although I had other analytical experiences afterwards, including the one with Fornari, which was brief, because he died after about a year that I was in analysis with him. The books came later, first

of all Bion's, but also Yalom, Anzieu and others. So my first contact was experiential: how was it for you?

Corbella: My answer cannot be short. I have to go back a long way, and I confess that this excites me not a little. It is a plunge into the past that brings me back to meet people who have been very important in my life. I go back to when, enrolled in the second year of the School of Specialisation in Psychology at the State University of Milan, I was doing my internship at the 'Paolo Pini' hospital under the teaching and supervision of Ferradini and Zapparoli. It was during a supervision of clinical cases that I heard Zapparoli propose group therapy for a patient for the first time, explaining the reasons for that choice, and I felt unease, restlessness and curiosity. At that time I was thinking of starting individual analysis, recommended by our lecturers. As is often the case with situations one fears, I had an underlying devaluing attitude towards therapeutic group work, of which I had only read articles here and there up to that point. On that occasion it came to my mind that in 1963, as a grammar school student but already fascinated by reading some of Freud's writings translated into Italian, I had seen an article in the 'Corriere Della Sera' concerning an international group psychotherapy congress in Milan. Reading that article had reinforced my nascent interest in individual psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis. The article argued, among other things, the possibility of establishing therapeutic relationships with individuals on a collective basis and also the principle that if society makes people ill, it must also be able to make them well. A principle that I later discovered was a thought of Trigant Burrow's, who had communicated it to Freud, receiving as a response the need for him to undergo an individual analysis as soon as possible. When, at the end of the specialisation course, I decided to phone Vanni, of whom I had spoken very highly of, and asked him if I could have an interview with him to begin a course of analysis, he replied: individual or group? Individual, I said in a voice at once firm and frightened. Group? Telling my innermost thoughts to strangers! But was this Vanni really good? Then I met him and began my personal analysis with him, whom I remember with deep gratitude, affection and esteem. With the science of it, I believe that perhaps it was no coincidence that I had chosen Vanni as my analyst, who I knew very well had worked with Diego Napolitani at the 'Omega' community and was, together with Napolitani, among the first in Milan to use group therapy. Later, guaranteed by my individual analysis, when 'groups' were mentioned in the internship, I began to listen with curiosity and interest. At Pini, therapeutic work with groups had begun to be done in the outpatient clinic. In that context, the foundations were being laid for structuring a real training in group psychotherapy. This training referred to meetings and research conducted by new group therapists, among whom I

remember: Elena Schiller, Luisa Balestri, Luisa Visconti under Vanni's supervision. Some colleagues and friends of 'Pini', Carlo Zucca Alessandrelli, Beppe Pellizzari, Renato De Polo, and others, had started to act as 'participant observers' in these groups and spoke of it as a complex and difficult but very enriching and stimulating experience. Conductors and observers had formed a group that then ironically called itself the 'group of groupers'. Group of which I became a member, once the analysis with Vanni was over, when I began with great interest, curiosity and fear, the experience of participant observer in a group led by Dr. Balestri whom I remember with great affection and deep esteem. Despite the fear of the first sessions, I was immediately fascinated by the complexity and richness of group work. Having joined the 'group of groupists' I began to read the first books on groups, to participate in the monthly evenings that took turns in the homes of the 'groupists' where our readings were referred to and discussed, and I definitely 'fell in love' with group work, so much so that I have some regrets for not having experienced being a patient in a group. In this regard Alberto, what do you remember of your experience as a patient in the group? Would you have preferred an individual analysis?

Lampignano: I don't remember much, partly because a few decades have passed. I do remember that the first year I spoke very little. I was inhibited and then I had an aggressiveness that was not well controlled. I used to get angry with those who talked a lot without leaving room for shy people like me. But then I had the courage to 'get pissed off' and things slowly turned out differently, allowing me to relate in various ways with all the members of the group. After some time I remember a few squabbles with a couple of group members, an intense initial transference towards the analyst, who, although not good-looking and also no longer young, had, in my opinion, beautiful hands. Once the group experience was over, having in the meantime matured to change profession, I set out in search of an analyst with whom I could do an individual analysis. Having graduated in Classics, I thought, as I did for a couple of years, of pursuing a university career, dealing with Greek literature and classical philology. In the meantime, I taught high school Italian and history. While analysing, I realised that I was not so much interested in the critical and literary aspects of both Italian and Greek literature, but above all in the human, psychological messages that the texts presented. My analytical experience in the group at the time was considered second class compared to my individual experience. So for all these reasons I turned to Fornari, with whom I immediately got on very well. I remember that I soon had the courage to tell him that I preferred Bion's theorisations to the co-analytic analysis, which was what he had formalised and proposed to the psychoanalytic community. That is, beyond the words we exchanged, I felt him empathetic, tolerant and even affectionate, if it is possible in our discipline to use such a

little-used term. And you never felt a desire to do a group analysis? Perhaps you felt that being a participant observer was something very similar to being a member of the group itself?

Corbella: Usually the participant observer experience lasts two years. In the first year you feel closer to the patients and not infrequently you recognise yourself in their problems to the extent that you bring into your personal analysis problems that have emerged through group work, and you have the fantasy that sooner or later having an experience as a group patient would be of great interest and value, but you do not feel like giving up your individual analytical path. In the second year you feel closer to the group leader and begin to identify with the role of conductor, in my case especially after the therapist had proposed that I take her place during a week of winter holidays. I still remember the deep emotion I felt when Dr Balestri made me that proposal: I was very flattered but also frightened. They were two memorable and intense sessions for me and the group, and when the doctor returned, the group reported on my conduct and promoted me in the field. I think back with deep gratitude to this offer from my conductor that allowed me to measure myself for the first time in the therapeutic role and to realise how much she had taught me through her experience as a participant observer. When I then began to have participant observers in my groups, mindful of the value of my experience, I proposed and continue to propose in the second year an experience like the one given to me by Dr. Balestri, and each time I see its profound value. Indeed, the participant observer experience makes one feel, at different times, to be a member of the group in the making, taking on different roles. What did you feel was 'therapeutic for you' on a personal level, and what then led you to become involved in group work?

Lampignano: As I mentioned earlier, both the experience with the group leader and the experience with the group members had a therapeutic value. Being affectively engaged in the group with different interlocutors stimulated the transformation of my prevailing intellectualism into a more participative and warm disposition towards people. I believe that one of the reasons I matured in my decision to undertake psychoanalytic studies and clinical practice was precisely due to group analysis where I became more deeply interested in my interlocutors, thus more sensitive to their needs and suffering. I like to emphasise, among the things that group analysis gave me, two aspects that I consider important in any group and individual analysis: idealisation and the concept of limits. I may not have mentioned it yet, but my group analyst was Kleinian. So I was analytically 'born' Kleinian. Very early on, however, I came into polite conflict with the Kleinians and also with Marcelle Spira, who for me and my fellow trainees was an almost undisputed

authority. It must be remembered that Marcelle Spira, a teaching analyst of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society, had made Klein known in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s by holding a series of seminars at the SPI offices in Rome and Milan. Idealisation was considered a defence mechanism that had to be analysed early on, because it was dereistic and inevitably led to de-idealisation, which produced problems in the course of analysis. This 'analytical disposition', which I would not call a defence mechanism, I have been dealing with for a long time, I think about thirty years, if I think back to my first paper presented - I don't remember the exact year, but in the early 1980s - until a few years ago. I published in 2013 in the journal the Argonauts the article 'On idealisation: saturated idealisation, unsaturated idealisation', in which I had a conception that I was satisfied with and considered to be definitive. Here I made the distinction between a saturated idealisation, incapable of coming into contact with the real, constructing a distorted image of it according to incoercible internal needs, and an unsaturated idealisation that retains the constituent elements of the object, connoting them with a gaze that captures above all its beauty, hope and trust; but it is susceptible to change in intensity, and the subject may also be able to do without it. The other theme I alluded to earlier, the concept of the limit, also revised and corrected with respect to the vulgate, which has accompanied me throughout much of my clinical activity, is more specifically the result of group experience, both the one I have personally made and the one that has seen me as a conductor. I have often heard and still hear even from very experienced colleagues that that patient, of whom one speaks, needs limits. As I understand the concept, it seems to me that the limit from most colleagues has to do with somewhat abstract norms of behaviour. As if one were to say: the patient cannot do certain things, because they go beyond the tolerable, the logically permissible. Instead, the limit has a variable value, not established by any ethical or technical norm. The limit does not have to do with norms, with common sense criteria, or with the explicit requirement for generic restraint. The limit has to do with the analyst. One analyst sets certain limits in the relationship with the patient, others set others. This does not have to do with a certain way of understanding the theory, but has to do with the person of the analyst in the first place and his or her considerations of the relationship that is taking place at a given moment. Some analysts have a higher tolerance of the patient's aggressiveness, than some of their colleagues. So their limits will be more surmountable than others of their colleagues. In group analysis, already as a patient, I realised that with certain companions I could allow myself certain disrespectful, or ironic, or disconcerting behaviour, while with others it was not possible. In retrospect, I realised that I mostly set different limits for myself depending on my interlocutor. But now to you. What were your theoretical-clinical references?

Corbella: In my experience, my personal analysis, the didactic analysis with Saraval, which is still a personal analysis, but with a didactic analyst from the SPI, my supervisors, who were Ferradini and Lopez, having been a participant observer, were fundamental in helping me to find my specific way of doing our work both individually and in groups. It was also very formative for me to have been part of the "gli Argonauti" group, which met weekly and proposed and discussed the articles of the magazine of the same name, and the exchange with Argo colleagues and being co-editor with Stefania Marinelli of the magazine Gruppo: Omogeneità e differenze. Our way of working, in my opinion, evolves in the becoming of life through readings, meetings, exchanges with colleagues and our own personal and professional existential experiences. It is only the confrontation with the other from you that allows you to recognise yourself in your differences and affinities and that makes each new encounter stimulating and full of surprises, which sometimes makes you realise aspects of yourself that amaze you. Thus, beyond the theories of reference, one can find stimuli for thought and innovative ways of subjectivising ourselves as professionals at any time in our lives, as long as one always remains willing to learn from experience and maintain epistemological rigour with one's theories of reference, which are also often in flux. Today there is a willingness to compare and contrast and to find points of contact between different reference theories that were not there at the beginning of the history of Milanese group-analysis. The references were either Foulkes or Bion. I must say, however, that in our group of group analysts we read all the books that were translated into Italian on groups, and Vanni's attitude was to pick flowers and use those flowers that appeared the most indicated according to the problems emerging from time to time in the complexity of group work. Our being friends for so many years and finding ourselves conversing together today is proof of this. Between my group association (A.P.G.) and yours (S.G.A.I.) there has always been a fruitful and mutually respectful exchange. You, after a Kleinian beginning, came to the Italian Group-Analytical Society, which had Diego Napolitani as its founder and undisputed leader. Diego referred in his writings to the internal gruppality of each individual. Has this concept had an impact on your way of leading groups?

Lampignano: Napolitani was fundamental to my training. I worked with him for over 30 years. His Individuality and Grouping of 1987 still remains for me his most important contribution to the history of psychoanalysis, which will remain alive for a long time to come, despite the many theoretical changes that have appeared on the psychoanalytic scene in recent years. Many things I have learnt do not derive from published essays, but from intense frequentation with those I have elected as masters, or privileged trainers. To put it in a nutshell, what I saw and see moving in the group are

mainly dynamics that tend to recreate in the session a problem or a theme that belongs in some aspect to each individual member: in other words, each one expresses an aspect of a dynamic that is central to him/herself that in the group field is unconsciously integrated and recomposed. Each participant makes an emotional contribution that goes to constitute together with that of the others a certain dynamic, in which each one has represented a part. But the other parts also often resonate with the other group members, allowing for a broader and deeper emotional experience. This is one of the peculiar aspects of the group experience. At one time, some thought that this very aspect of resonance could be an accelerator in the analytic journey, which was then supposed to be 'faster', i.e. to last less, than the individual one. I think things are more complex. The two experiences are not superimposable. They each have a particular value. An experience which does not only concern group analysis, but which in group analysis takes on, in my experience, a more sensitive, more propulsive impact, occurs when the analyst does not understand what is happening in a session in the group. Usually when one does not understand one enters into an unpleasant state of mind, sometimes difficult to tolerate. One tries to discombobulate the scraps of theory one knows, without being helped, because they do not fit the situation. I have noticed that if one accepts that one does not know and does not invent something improper to confirm oneself in the role of the one who knows, very valuable situations can arise. I also realised that when I do not understand it is not the end of the world, my authority is not questioned. If I limit myself to describing the interventions without interpreting, that is to say, to re-narrating with my words and my emotions what I 'saw' happening in the group, this has a function that brings together what was dispersed in the chaotic group discourse, it is something that unites, that brings together and that can be propaedeutic to new ways of being together. In short, one must not, in my opinion, be obsessed with interpretation. Sharing, interest are very valuable. Moreover, the events that happen in a session go to make up what we can call the 'history of the group' itself. With respect to the group dynamics I referred to, what experience do you have? Do you find any of them and have you identified others as recurring and founding group dynamics?

Corbella: I fully agree with you that what happens in the group field involves all the participants co-constructing the story. With respect to dynamics, the first thing I talk about in class are the potentially destructive dynamics that the leader must know how to recognise in a short time so that they do not lead to the disintegration of the group. These are: splitting into small groups, the unspoken, and scapegoating. I also consider it important to emphasise that I have repeatedly noted how Oedipal themes are presented and dealt with in the group for the whole group and for each participant, who in the course of his therapy can represent and see represented all the characters of Oedipal

complexity. Then I stress the analyst's ability to activate and preserve in the group what Neri called 'good sociality'. An important achievement of these years of evolution of our way of working with groups is the attention to the relationships and the specific relational modalities of each member that the group allows to recognise and transform the pathological aspects. What do you think about this?

Lampignano: The change that I think is most important, beyond the various theories that have mixed, as you said, with each other, giving more respectful and acute results of group events, is the analyst's attitude. As far as I was concerned, but I was then in a large group, as far as I know, the group leader of the 1980s and later did not differ much from the analyst who operated in the dual setting: quite silent, with short interventions, often asking questions and occasionally two or three interpretations. Over time, almost without realising it (but much has to do with the exchange with colleagues and the various essay readings), I became more active and participative, offering my personal impressions and emotions, to make the process more fluid and natural. It may seem strange to you, but an important contribution from this point of view I took from a work by Luciana Nissim Momigliano, which does not concern groups, but individual analysis: "Due persone che parlano in una stanza" (Two people talking in a room), which appeared in Rivista di Psicoanalisi in 1984. Here I perceived in the Italian psychoanalytic universe a different way of understanding the analytic relationship, more dynamic, egalitarian, respectful. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Diego Napolitani was anything but orthodox, so his messages in which he argued for being more people in relationship than scientists studying their object, was a daily lesson. As far as the setting was concerned, I went from three one-hour sessions a week (this is the Kleinian era) to one session a week, consisting of a first part lasting an hour and a quarter, to another of the same duration, interspersed with a 15-minute break. This setting was established according to the needs of the patients. When I started with the groups, many patients came from outside Milan, from other provinces, if not other regions. So this new setting met the needs of the patients. This setting, by the way, was what Napolitani and all the SGAI groupists practised.

Corbella: Vanni, if I remember correctly, initially did three one-hour sessions a week but most APG groupists did two one-hour or one and a quarter hour sessions a week. The economic crisis at the end of the first decade of the new millennium and the changed rhythms of work led me and many other colleagues I dealt with to reduce the two one-hour weekly meetings to a single one-and-a-half-hour meeting. At first, the time between

sessions seemed too long, but then, having to make a virtue of necessity, we got used to it, and I must say that it is a rhythm that works well.

You edited the *Rivista Italiana di Gruppoanalisi* for several years. I imagine it was an important experience that allowed you to observe changes in progress.

Lampignano: I directed the journal from 1996 to 2007, then I remained as editor in chief until 2011, if I am not mistaken. As editor-in-chief, I gave space to voices other than our theoretical line. Thanks to the suggestion of various colleagues, we published several authors 'out of the chorus'. Edi Gatti Pertegato 'discovered' Trigant Burrow, the first American psychoanalyst to deal with group psychoanalysis, original and little known. He has published several contributions on his work. I could make a long list of articles by authors of other orientations published during my editorship. Among others, I remember Raymond Battegay, Earl Hopper, Max Rosenbaum, Jaun Campo Avillar, Claudio Neri and a certain Silvia Corbella. I am certainly forgetting some, even important ones. But I absolve myself, referring those interested to the RIGA 1996 - 2007 vintages. I must say that several authors I proposed were not too well received by the orthodox 'sgaiani'. Even Napolitani made me understand that their theoretical contribution was not so important. For me, on the other hand, without believing that certain contributions could change my view of the psychic, I found them somehow stimulating: they helped me to think and broaden my view. The change, in conclusion, was gradual, sometimes without being fully aware of it. For me there was no Pauline electrocution on the road to Damascus. I would say that the social climate also contributed to transforming a somewhat opinionated approach of the analyst, of one who knows the truth, into a more 'democratic' and respectful one. A very significant experience for me, which I described in my article "Gruppalità ed episodicità in un gruppo terapeutico 'aperto' di un reparto psichiatrico" *Psichiatria Oggi*, 8, 2, 1995 (1st part), and in issue 9, 1, 1996 (2nd part), was the conduction of an 'open' therapeutic group in the psychiatric ward of the S. Paolo hospital, to which my C.P.S. referred. It was an absorbing and overwhelming experience, because the sessions were almost always hell. I had to deal with seriously and acutely ill patients, so there was a flurry of patients in the meeting room who would say a few words or then leave. But there were also those who stayed and stayed until the end of the treatment lasting a few months. It would take a long time even to summarise what happened and what I did as a conductor in such a situation. The peculiar features I would like to briefly mention are these: 1) the group's course was mostly characterised by a strong episodic nature. In short, only for a couple of people was there an unfolding of the dynamics, which implied a job done. For the others, it was mostly a matter of discharging fragmentary emotions, often characterised by aggression, which also brought a certain relief, but which recurred in the following sessions in almost the same way; 2) the sessions

were mostly mastered by one or two patients, who were instinctive, aggressive, uncontrolled. Or by those who felt themselves to be victims, so the complaints and calls for help and justice prevailed; 3) the interventions were often disconnected from each other and even for the analyst it was difficult to see links in a kind of jagged, disjointed free associations. In order not to be one-sided, I must emphasise that there were moments of affectionate contact, of tender and demure showing of oneself, even of solidarity and help. As a conclusion to the description of this very difficult, but very involving and in many ways fascinating experience, I would like to report a kind of synthesis that I ventured in my article: "The impression is that in these patients there is a disintegrated group in which the various characters are in a conflictual relationship, dominated for the most part by an overbearing, unwilling to mediate, impulsive character. The other members of the group are suffering, little listened to, subjugated to the autocratic organisation. The leading character, however, is not an organiser, the one who manages the power, but a kind of coarse, sinewy gorilla who submits, and goes. Where? Even he does not know, he only demands that the way be cleared'. And a group that would tend to break up if the leader did not intervene to create new bonds. And this can happen with counter-transference involvement, difficult but intense. The experience was not followed up not because of the patients, but because of the health personnel with whom I discussed the group after the session. For a while there was interest, then to my regret it died out.

Corbella: In recent years I have the impression that many institutions have come to understand and appreciate the usefulness of analytically oriented group work. More often than not, homogeneous groups are requested for a fixed period of time. These topics were discussed and explored in depth in Argo's magazine "Group: Homogeneity and Differences". If I remember correctly, you also had other editorial assignments, where did you catch the first changes taking place? Perhaps you yourself were sometimes the spokesman. For example in the various articles you have already mentioned on the subject of idealisation, in particular in the one "On idealisation: saturated idealisation and unsaturated idealisation", The Argonauts, 137, June 2013, an article whose content I very much appreciated.

Lampignano: The Rivista di Psicoanalisi is certainly the most prestigious Italian journal, as is the SPI, which publishes it and to which you belong. My references and membership were less prestigious. This is a disadvantage, because what you write has less visibility, less authority. But it can be an advantage, because your fellow travellers do not have to adhere to behaviours that the authoritative institution induces you to follow, even unwillingly. So my curiosity in experimenting with new attitudes in the setting was freer, it seems to me. By way of example I will tell you that in one group there had

been a brief love affair between two group members, which was confided to me in private by the patient, who was frightened at having done something she feared was irreparable. I remember that at the time my fellow group members believed that secrets within the group led to damage, if not to its disintegration. My attitude was one of waiting, accompanied by a certain amount of anxiety. The situation of secrecy lasted a few months, uncertain whether I would find the opportunity to reveal it. On that occasion my 'negative capacity' was successful, because the girl eventually revealed what had happened. And that was for her an accelerator of a new fruitful work on herself, with a very satisfying final outcome.

Corbella: In the situation you described you contextualised the problem and felt you could trust the girl, you knew how to wait and accept that you didn't know how it would end. I think that with respect to rules we must allow ourselves a flexible attitude capable of contextualising and understanding what is best to do in that situation, in that specific group and with those participants. You mentioned earlier about your work within the institutions. In your opinion, in these fifty years, have there been any changes with regard to analytically oriented small groups?

Lampignano: I don't know. I think so. I have to tell you that working in psychiatric institutions was very tiring for me. In the group of caregivers there were often people who unravelled what you were building. That is why I regretfully decided to resign after ten years. Although I often had satisfaction and learned a lot from the patients, the fatigue of undoing certain 'bad work' drove me to give up. I have to be very grateful to my psychiatric experience in the institution because it gave me the knowledge that I was a good therapist. How did I come to this awareness? With the results I achieved despite the obstacles and with the recognition of a good part of the team. Especially from the nurses, who often begged me to take seriously disturbed patients into therapy, who were stationed in the CPS and made their work more burdensome. You still lead groups, whereas I stopped a few years ago. Do you feel that your style has changed now compared to the beginning? If so, in what way?

Corbella: With respect to the way I lead the group, I too have felt freer over time and I have realised that only if you know the rules well can you "break them" by taking responsibility for them, i.e. the ability to answer why you have broken them, and to explain what your motivations were on both a theoretical and clinical level, always maintaining epistemological rigour. Moreover, the changes that have occurred in the social context are certainly not insignificant. Emerging pathologies and the way of communicating even

between analyst and patient have changed. Covid then modified the group setting and of necessity made it virtual. This inevitably induced the conductor to feel he/she is in the same boat as the patients but at the helm and to be more active since all the sensory aspects shared in the group setting in presence are absent in the virtual. Once the obligation of the virtual is over, today I have sometimes in-presence groups, sometimes virtual, sometimes mixed groups, partly in presence and partly virtual. The virtual has remained as a possibility and allows people, who for work or health reasons would miss one or more sessions, to participate. But this possibility cannot be generalised a priori, it is the conductor's responsibility to contextualise when, how, and in which group the request for the virtual by a participant takes place, and what specific meaning it has, at that moment, for the patient and for the group as a whole.

To conclude, we can say that in these fifty years, in some respects, the way of conducting groups has changed over time. We have exchanged reflections and thoughts and now, summarising, I would like to highlight the changes that I have found myself fully sharing. I welcomed with great interest the shift to increased attention to the relational modalities of the group participants, modalities that in individual analysis are told to us in good faith by the patient, but that not infrequently seen 'in action' in the group, appear very different. The internal world is not only recounted but in the group is expressed in the specific relational modalities of each participant. If I remember correctly, Foulkes, Burrow's first heir, had already hypothesised that the pathology was not in the individual but in his relational modalities. Friedmann in his latest book *Managing Conflicts* ((2019.tr.it 2021 Franco Angeli) argues that 'a matrix is the set of relationships and culture of a group or society, it is the communicative network of a community. Even if one has a matrix, clinicians usually speak of individual, dynamic and foundational 'matrices' rather than perspectives.'" (pg 144.) . And he tells us :The late Yehuda Amihai, an Israeli poet, captured the essence of group-analysis when he wrote (pg.62)

*People use each other
as a healing for pain. They put each other
on their existential wounds,
on their eye, on their mouth and on their open hand.
They hold each other tightly and do not let go*

(Amihai, 1986, p. 77). Reading this beautiful poem reminded me again of Claudio Neri's concept of 'good sociality', which - recalling Bion's statement: A healthy mental development seems to depend on truth as the living organism depends on food, if truth is missing the personality deteriorates - modifies it in the following way: Healthy mental development seems to depend on good sociality.

Lampignano: I agree with this perspective that you and other colleagues share. At a conference Fornari at one point came up with this strange phrase, which only someone born in the Piacenza countryside could say: 'Freud is like the pig: everything is good, nothing is thrown away'. Since then we have left behind many conceptualisations and as many new ones we have assimilated, as it is for the contribution of Freud, of Bion, as of other giants of our discipline, but even of them not everything is good. However, Bion's insistence on the value of truth seems to me, when combined with the perspective of 'good sociality', a curb to a possible drift towards conformism. The concept of truth is philosophically difficult to define. From Parmenides onwards there has been nothing but discussion of it. As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, I think it is important to try to know who one is, who we are, in our becoming. An impossible goal, but one to which we must aspire. So one could think of an erratic conjugation between truth and good sociality, depending on contexts and individuals.

Corbella: Good sociability is food for the mind and well-being of the soul. Being able to substitute good sociality for truth means allowing oneself to move from thinking based on something absolute to something contextualisable, flexible and dynamic. Truth and good sociality are not mutually exclusive but can be complementary and used together or separately, and as you rightly say, depending on the contexts and issues the specific group is going through.

Dear Alberto, we have briefly addressed a period of time in which important changes have taken place in analytically oriented group work, and I think that our exchange from vantage points that are, in some respects, different, has led us, in our dynamic wandering, along a shared path. Where will it lead us?

Group Psychoanalysis: Reporting on 50 Years of Work

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