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Newsletter

from the Group Analytic Section in Germany

Contemporary group analysis in Germany is momentarily developing a German Society of Group Analysis and Group Psychotherapy which will be founded at the 15th of October 2011 in the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Before that this first and historical unique unification of three group analytic sections had to face serious challenges from various parties mostly based on the historical roots of the different group (analytic) movements. The majority of the members of "The German Working Group for Group Psychotherapy and Group Dynamics" (*Deutscher Arbeitskreis für Gruppenpsychotherapie und Gruppendynamik - DAGG*) – integrating six sections which are dealing in different contexts with groups - decided 2010 to dissolve their organization at the end of 2011. This happened after a long lasting discussion on structural problems beginning 2007/2008, which made the organization decreasingly unattractive for new, but also for older members. "The German Working Group for Group Psychotherapy and Group Dynamics" was founded 1967 by Heigl-Evers and coworkers as an alliance of very different group sections, trying to integrate six different sections which were group oriented in any way (for further information of these sections see Tab.1 or look on www.dagg.de). There had been a lot of reasons for this development but one of them was certainly the incoherency between the more group analytical orientated versus the more group technical orientated sections of Psychodrama and Group Dynamics, which had founded own legitimated societies since the 90ies of the last century under the umbrella of the DAGG.

Gruppendynamik (GD) – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gruppendynamik und Organisationsdynamik
Psychodrama – Fachverband für Psychodrama
Sozialtherapie und psychosoziale Praxis (STpP)
Analytische Gruppentherapie (AG)
Klinik und Praxis (KuP)
Intendierte dynamische Gruppenpsychotherapie (IDG)

Tab. 1 The six sections in the German Working Group of Group Therapy and Group Dynamics (DAGG), founded 1967

These reasons necessitated that the remaining three analytic group sections (Analytic Group Therapy - AG, Clinic and Practice - KuP and Intended Dynamic Group Therapy - IDG) had to transform themselves to an own legitimate Society for Group Analysis. Whereas the AG-members were mainly trained in group analysis after finishing their individual training in psychoanalysis, KuP-members could be trained and working as group analysts without training in psychoanalysis. Up to the nineties the clinical orientation dominated which was obviously represented by many heads of clinical departments, but it was also possible to become a group analyst without being a medical doctor or psychologist. The IDG was constituted 1969 in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) as group psychotherapy section by Kurt Höck and Helga Hess and drew all projections of the special east west conflict on it.

At the last may weekend of 2011 these three analytic group sections organized the first (and certainly the last) conjoint congress with the title "The Unconscious in Groups" in the Harnack Guest House of the Free University of Berlin which was very successful. More than 240 participants were so deeply interested – especially nearly 100 who had never visited such a congress before - that the organizer had to stop registrations in account of room problems. (For whom who is interested in the German report of the congress happening see www.dgfga.de including a lot of photos).

The meetings of the members of all three sections at this congress voted nearly concordantly for unification of these three sections named as German Society of Group Analysis and Group Psychotherapy (D3G), they voted also for a new constitution, which is very near to the EFPP standards of group analytic training. It is now possible that training candidates can become a group analyst without training as psychoanalyst before but they have to master the double of hours in theory and group experience.

The future of group analysis - not only in Germany - will be probably determined by the expectations and demands from the so-called consumers of health services and the curtness of human resources in day hospitals and clinical departments, for which reason the training in group analysis and their modifications as the treatment should be adjusted to the

patient's disorders, treatment wishes and expectations (Schultz-Venrath & Döring 2009). For group analysis in the future the question arises, whether that implies modifications of thinking and practice. The epoch of group analysis as "one cure – fix all" may be over, like Thor Kristian Island has recently published (Island 2010). Like the Norwegians we have to develop more specialized group based therapies.

The unification of these three sections in a new German Society of Group Analysis and Group Psychotherapy which perhaps will start with nearly 300 to 400 members allows some expectations on effects of synergy and this is an important step for more professionalization of an group analytic organization.

Such effects of synergy are necessary

- for the development and evaluation of training standards,
- for the representations of interests on health political grounds,
- for the development of the basic concepts of group analysis as a interdisciplinary theory,
- for coordination and initiation of group analytic research,
- for the edition of a scientific group analytic journal,
- for the efforts of anchoring of group analysis at the universities,
- for the interference in debates, which are important but will be conducted in other professions or in the public.

With regards to the contents of this unification is the consensus that group analysis is grounded in psychoanalytic theory and practice but has established itself as a „social theory of the mind“, in which the unconscious plays a central role. Group analysis is therefore located at the point of intersection of psychoanalysis, psychology, philosophy, sociology, education, biology and (social) neuroscience and fructifies insights of these disciplines for the analysis of conscious and unconscious group processes.

The new foundation of a German Society of Group Analysis and Group Psychotherapy makes high demands on the regards and on the custody of grown and respected differences of the three sections. Perhaps this is a model for growing and non-splitting development which group analysis needs more than other psychotherapies for being important in our democratic societies.

References

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