

'Identification - in Life and in Training'

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Dear hosts, dear colleagues, dear friends

It's a great pleasure for me once again to visit Lisbon and the Group Analysis Society this time to provide you with a presentation to be discussed.

It shall be no secret that in the beginning I resisted the idea, because the theory of the theme was not in the vicinity of where I was usually digging, and furthermore I had the presentiment that my domestic situation could take much more of my time than I could anticipate. However, I decided to take the chance, primarily because I for some years have been preoccupied with what kind of idols, heroes and other role models are available and valued in our societies.

With curiosity I have noticed the preferences in music and films and the values and idols among young people, especially the eating disordered young girls I have treated in group for many years.

Furthermore I have reflected on my experiences with role models, both my self as a teacher and training analyst and as a trainee within a larger professional society.

I have called my paper 'Identification - in life and in training', which was sufficiently broad to cover just about everything, I had in mind, when I shipped the title.

I will list different types of identification processes, mention some therapeutic group factors related to identification, and give some examples of the extensive and somewhat neglected significance of Identification in therapy and in training.

Identification

In ordinary language 'Identification' means to define the identity of a person or a thing. In psychodynamic theory 'Identification' is defined as a permanent identity-changing and unconscious psychic process, where the individual incorporates qualities and functions from another person into the 'ego' or the 'self'.

Furthermore it has been used about all forms of norm- and role modelling, which takes place when associating with idealized persons. In those cases the psychodynamic psychology will prefer the term 'imitation' (or 'imitative identification'), because it partly is a conscious process with a time limited effect, while identification in psychodynamic understanding primarily is unconscious and leads to a profound and lasting change of the structure of personality.

Originally four types of 'Identification' were described, all implying a loss of or a rivalry with the identification object: 1. Primary identification, 2. Identification with a rival, 3. Identification with the lost love object and 4. Identification within a social community.

Primary identification is perhaps the earliest expression of an emotional tie to another person and serves the task to maintain a relationship to an object. This type of identification is closely related to oral incorporation.

'Secondary or true identification' then means a transformation of one ego by its assumed complete uniformity with another in certain respects on the basis of unconscious mechanisms and as a rule for unconscious reasons. This identification makes use of introjection in most cases, but not always. It consists, however, not of a simple intake of the object, but of its re-establishment, almost re-creation or resurrection, as one might say.

Schneider (1926) sees development occurring in alternating stages of integration and trauma, identification being in the service of integration. Identification is in itself a most important factor in mental life, as mentioned probably the earliest form of affective relation to another person, ambivalent in essence, corresponding to the earliest cannibalistic stage of the libido, and to the narcissistic stage of the ego. The object is at the same time preserved inside and lost outside. Identification thus replaces object-relations, no matter whether the objects become inaccessible or forbidding, i.e. bad, hated, in real experience, or the aim of aggression for inner reasons. Each identification is therefore a monument of an object-relation, and our character, being itself composed of identifications, contains the history of our object-relations.

Introjection

Foulkes' major theoretical paper on psychoanalysis was on 'Introjection'. He stated that 'projection', 'Introjection' and 'identification' were three mechanisms so intimately interwoven that it was impossible to present one of them altogether in isolation.

He pointed out that important inner structures like the 'Ego' and the 'Super ego' could be understood and understood only as the outcome of a series of identifications taking place at all stages of our development. (Foulkes, 1937)

Ferenczi found that identification was the forerunner of introjection. Introjection takes place by means of identification. On arriving at the formulation that our character is based upon introjected objects, it becomes clear, that there is perhaps more than an analogy in the primitive belief, that we acquire the properties of things which we eat (such as animals), and that we become identified by the same substance we take in (for instance through Holy Communion).

'Incorporation' is an instinctual activity, which aims at taking an external part of the world into the mouth, swallowing it and in this way making it a part of the physical self. The aim of incorporation is satisfaction without regards to the objects. In this sense it indicates neither hatred nor love. 'Introjection' is that *psychic* phenomenon which is parallel to incorporation and is modeled after incorporation (Glover, 1939). It is an attempt to take into the self, objects in the external world in order to re-experience that pleasurable sense of satisfaction which was originally felt in the gratification of hunger.

Foulkes suggests that the term 'identification' be reserved as the 'ego'-term, 'introjection' as the 'id'-term of two overlapping processes. Accordingly, 'identification' is a more static term, describing a state of affairs; 'introjection' signifies an activity.

Fenichel (1925) insisted that every identification (except the primary identification) was based upon an introjection.

Identification (= introjection) is a recreation of the object inside, and not simply an oral incorporation; the introject is an image, identification an actual alteration of the ego: being now the object, one cannot have it any more. It is, one might suggest, the difference between swallowing and digestion.

'Internalisation' is sometimes used as a superior concept for incorporation, introjection and identification. We talk about internalisation, when regulations, which has taken place in interaction with the outer world, are replaced of inner regulations. It is especially used for the establishment of the superego.

Identification and Rivalry

'Identification with the Aggressor' is a part of the oedipal complex. The rival is internalized in the super-ego, and the desired attributes will function as Ego-ideal.

Jealousy and rivalry is well known among siblings. Younger brothers who have successfully overcome an envious hatred of their older brothers, regard them with affection as soon as an identification goes far enough for them to consider their brother's successes their own. They then no longer feel 'He is successful and I am not', but 'We are successful'. Such mechanisms often play a decisive part in pathological hero worship. This type of overcompensating love through identification well serves the purpose of getting rid of a disturbing and hopeless hatred, for the patient need no longer compete with his brother.

Hysterical identification comes in several variations. The most frequent form takes place with an object towards which the patient has no genuine object relation. It is formed 'on the basis of identical etiological needs'. Freud used a hysterical epidemic in a girl's school as an example: A girl reacts with a fainting spell to a love letter and then the other girls also get fainting spells. The unconscious meaning is: "We should like to get love letters, too". The object of the identification has no other significance than that she got a gratification, for which the subject had likewise longed. This mechanism looks like a simple imitation. It is however unconscious. Any imitation, whether conscious or unconscious, presupposes a kind of identification that is an alternation of one's own ego, which follows the pattern of an object model. However, the identification at the basis of imitation, - as contrasted to other types of identification, is a superficial, limited, capricious one, employed for one definite purpose only. This purpose may or may not be conscious.

Identification and mourning

The 'work of mourning' is a difficult and unpleasant task, which many persons try further to retard by holding on to the illusion that the lost person still lives. This phenomenon is closely related to 'identification'. All disappointed persons, including the depressed ones, employ the same mechanisms - namely regression from love to incorporation, from object relationship to identification.

There is plenty of evidence that mourners identify with the dead person. The study of the folklore of death and burial costumes offers convincing evidence for the universality of introjection as a reaction to the loss of an object.

Mourning becomes more complicated or even pathological, if the relationship of the mourner to the lost object was an extremely ambivalent one. In this case the introject can acquire a sadistic significance. The incorporation then not only represents an attempt to preserve the loved object, but also an attempt to destroy

the hated object. If a hostile significance of this kind is in the foreground, the introjection will create new guilt feelings.

Projective Identification

Projective identification is originally an intra-psychic concept of a primitive defence mechanism used in the paranoid schizoid position (Klein, 1973), where the very little child projects parts of the self, thoughts, qualities, feelings etc. which cannot be contained, into the mother. Projective identification always involves splitting, because the process secludes psychic material that cannot be contained in the person, but has to be projected.

Since Klein, the concept has been reformulated primarily by Bion and Ogden as a concept of social processes, which involves two or more persons, and where intra-psychic processes alternates with inter relational processes.

In the article, 'On projective identification', Ogden (1979) advances the idea, that a development of a concept about the interchange between the inner world (the intra-psychic sphere) and the outer world (phenomenon in the external reality) is not enough emphasized in the psychoanalytic thinking, and that the concept of projective identification is well suited as such an explaining and bridge building concept. According to Ogden, projective identification is as well a defence mechanism, a form of communication, a form of object relations and a way of psychic development.

Also to Bion the projective identification process is not only a defence mechanism. When projective identification processes lead to development through containing, the material, which was the target of splitting, is integrated on a higher level.

Projective identification can be described as a process in five sequences, the last three dependent of the recipient's reaction: I. Intra-psychic process in A (Anxiety and projective Fantasy) → II. Interaction process between A and B (Projective pressure from A) → III. Intra-psychic process in B (1. Identification, 2. Anxiety, 3. Containing) → IV. Interaction process between A and B (Giving back the projected material) → V. Intra-psychic process in A (1. Joined defence, 2. More anxiety, 3. Development).

Let's say a man has difficulties with his sexual identity. Then he can place his female tendencies in a woman in order to sit back with the male aspect in pure and non-diluted form. The projective pressure can be to look away from some and focus on other specific possessions or characteristics of the other, for instance to pick on all positive performances and let all failures out; to commend every aggressive utterances and keep out the peaceful and funny, or praise the others feminine attitude and look away from the paramilitary outfit of her clothes.

If B has an inner conflict or anxiety of the same kind as A, she will be compelled to identify with the projected. This projective pressure suggests in this way a mutual defence mechanism involving a changed role model between the partners, which B participates in to get rid of her own anxiety.

If B for instance is a woman who has difficulties in her sexual identity, she can take A's projection of his female side upon her and sign for it by developing a fantasy that A is a real man and at the same time

project her own masculine impulses onto A. The woman who was praised can continue conversation about themes which do not involve how important it is to be 'pure' woman or man.

As a mutual defence they confirm each other in this all pure identity, which can be functional till the day one of them can't keep the role any more (Visholm, 2002).

Discussions of the nature of the concept of projective identification still persist.

The concept of 'counter transference' is closely related to projective identification. Money-Kyrle described the smooth 'normal course' of transference and countertransference as a fairly rapid oscillation between introjection and projection:

"As the patient speaks, the analyst will, as it were, become introjectively identified with him and having understood him inside, will reproject him and interpret. But what I think the analyst is most aware of is the projective phase - that is to say, the phase in which the patient is the representative of a former immature or ill part of himself, including his damaged objects, which he can now understand and therefore treat by interpretation, in the external world" (Money-Kyrle, 1956).

Grinberg (1979) named the analyst's unconscious answers to the patient's projections as 'projective counter identification'. Racker (1957) distinguished among an analyst's countertransference reactions according to two forms of identification, calling them 'concordant' and 'complementary'. In concordant identification the analyst identifies himself with the corresponding part of the patient's psychic apparatus. The analyst thus experiences the feeling in himself in the same way the patient does. The expression 'complementary identification' which goes back to Deutsch (1926), describes the analyst's identification with the patient's object of transference. The analyst then experiences feelings in the same way as the patient's mother or father, for example feelings of an oppressor mistreating a 'victim'.

The countertransference feelings has been describes (by Heimann) as the patients 'creation'. However, it seems that the pendulum has swung back to question this radical view.

Critical voices suggest the debate about 'Projective Identification' derailed in focusing too much on the interpersonal aspect. The intersubjective context and the therapists own contribution to feelings and interpersonal processes, especially his own self-object needs, are not being sufficiently emphasized.

Idealization

'Idealization' is a psychic process, where the individual's narcissistic libido contributes to an unrealistic glorification of an object, it be a thing, a person or an idea. The individual continues to love himself in another person's figure (form) and like in normal love the object here will be the focus of idealization. The idealization expresses itself as an over evaluation, worshipping or adoration; - an exaggeration of the positive assets and a corresponding neglect of the negative.

The ideal ego is a grandiose imagination that the child can have, about what can be achieved in the outer world, while the ego-ideal is a part of the superego and serves as a goal or model for the individual to become such a person or self.

The making of an idol is closely connected to the need of an idealized self object and its importance for maintaining a stable 'Self'. In the real life's idolatry there is an interaction between the ego-ideal and the external idol.

Identity and Idols

As specific psychodynamic nomination, 'Identity' was introduced by Erikson (1968), who distinguished between 'ego-identity' and 'group-identity'. Erikson saw the 'Ego-identity' as a combined construct of identifications, which is integrated and maintained in a dynamic process. Belonging to the Ego-identity is also the conscious experience of being the same person during the process of life. The 'Group-identity' originates from aspects of the identity which is derived from our bonds to for example a nation, a people or a religion. A person's identity is constantly adjusted, and most of what the person does, reassures his identity. Meta psychologically there is a close connection between 'Identification' and 'Identity', because all ideas, to be identified with, is also included in identity. From a topological angle, identity consists of the Ego and large parts of the Superego. The 'group identity' includes those parts of the superego, which Freud named the Ego-ideal (Freud, 1923).

A sufficient successful course through the oedipal phase will imply identification with the parent of the same sex. We must recognize the similarities with our parents. Hopefully there is something good to identify with? Not rarely, identification figures and role models are found away from the primary family (School, next door family).

During the last fifty years there has been a general shift in personal identities away from identities bound to work and family towards identities individually built and based on relational values.

Gergen has argued that we cannot anymore sustain the idea about the human self as one essence or well-defined core in the individual.

"In the postmodern reality 'selves' must be regarded as manifestations of relations. Each and every person is involved in many different social relations and is embedded in different subcultures and social contexts. The post modern individual which has many relations, has a multiplicity of social embedded 'selves' (Gergen, 1991)

This 'patchwork-identity' has a high degree of flexibility and adaptability, but runs the risk of being superficial and unauthentic to others. Sometimes the person can feel that he is not faithful to his true self and can 'lose contact' to himself (his 'self').

To day we experience a massive impregnation by the television, where lots of programs are based on the spectator's identification. To be a pop or sport star, rich and good looking seems to be qualities that are frequently identified with in the teen-age years!

Michael Jackson, the 48- years old American pop star, has for some time been increasingly shrouded in isolation.

From the year of five he had the most prominent role in the singing family group 'Jackson Five', living in a hostile and bulleting milieu dominated by the father who I understand was sadistic in attitude and restricting young Michael's access to normal relations with other children and young people. He has unwillingly become a bizarre example of an unsuccessful attempt to change identity from Afro-American to a more 'white' look. His diffuse and unstable identity prevails through his sexual orientation. There also seems to be a flaw in his identity and performance as a concerning father. In stead his identification with Peter Pan, forever longing for childhood, has manifested itself in the creation of an amusement park on private ground with the name 'Neverland' (the name of Peter Pan's imagination land).

Apparently he can still be an idol for a generation of young people. I understand he represent the ultimate success also, skilled in music and dance (moon walk) which can be imitated and sold with no regards to the rest of the story.

Michael was 'King' of the pop indicating a royal membership, the glory and extravagance of which attracts so much attention.

Lady Diana didn't become queen, and was probably more admired by many young people after, than before her untimely death in 1997, at the age of 36. She rebelled against the British aristocracy and against the neglective behavior of her husband. For bulimic girls around the world she became a role model for fighting mines and diseases (her own?), and to be open about her eating disorder. However, it came as a big surprise, not only for the English queen, but also for professionals that her death created so much attention, so much sorrow and grief and a great deal of regressive and hysterical behavior, when several hundred thousand people followed her funeral. Mirroring and massive projective and introjective mechanisms were in play. I think her beautiful looking played an important role and the care for (the) other disabled children. The rest is less important.

For these large scale identifications these idols are casted into epic roles taking archaic features. And the flaws in their personality seem to enhance their usability as identification objects.

Identifications in groups

The Conference theme probably paraphrases the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's book: 'Oneself as another' (1992). He suggests that 'the self' has a two dimensional constitution, characterized by 'idem'-identity ('sameness') and 'Ipse'-identity ('selfhood'). 'Self' constancy in the 'idem' sense is that my characteristics to day more or less is the same as yesterday, while the constancy in 'Ipse' sense is, that I to day fulfill the promise, I gave yesterday. Furthermore I have a narrative identity which bridges 'idem' and 'ipse'. Stories make my character traits meaningful as described experiences with others. Understanding of one self as narratives (about my self) need detours to others and the outer world, that is matters by which I understand my self. Through this self-understanding I can recognize my project for life, which is headed toward the future, and challenge my 'Ipse'-identity (being faithful to one self). The 'Self' is not self-sufficient. It needs other ('friends') to move from possibility to realization (of talents and projects). To be faithful towards

others is therefore inseparable from faithfulness to one self. In this context of 'idem', 'ipse', life project and relations, the following aim can be formulated: The desire to live well with and for others in just institutions.

The narratives in the group are an ongoing text, which can be decoded (interpreted). A model for understanding group dynamics could be a radical model of text interpretation. By radical we mean, that it is critical and takes into consideration the history of the group and of the observer's position (Karterud, 1999)

Kohut's self-psychology is mainly consistent with Ricoeur's hermeneutic of the self. His psychology has played an important role not just as a theory of how to understand (by empathy), but also as a theory of how to change. Most interesting, when talking about identifications in groups, is his concept of self objects. The need for these comes in three variations: 'Mirroring self object' needs are the needs to be seen, recognized, appreciated, encouraged, and praised, 'Idealizing self object' needs are the needs to feel cared for, included and protected and 'Alter-ego self object' needs are the name of the needs for confirmation by experiencing a similarity with the other in thinking, judgment, behavior and emotionality.

When I thought about the theme of this seminar 'All the others that I am', I first thought, that what was going on in groups was a succession of identifications and other psychic mechanisms, where identification played an important part.

Identification also means to recognize something, something earlier experienced, but forgotten or something well known and easily recognized. Sometimes we recognize something, we don't consciously know, but of which we have a bodily memory. To recognize - and match or pair - is a common group phenomenon, taking place early and playing an important role, when entering a therapeutic group.

Learning through the observation of others is an omnipresent feature of psychotherapy, but group psychotherapy provides even more opportunities for such learning to take place, since a group member has not only the therapist but also several peers to identify with or to imitate. In their book of therapeutic factors in group psychotherapy, Bloch & Crouch (1985) have widened the concept of 'vicarious learning' to include two forms of learning: 1) Imitation of qualities in others deemed desirable by the observer; and 2) Learning that stems from the observer's identification with a fellow-patient's specific experience in therapy.

The central process involved in the operation of vicarious learning is identification. A believes that an experience of B is similar to his own, or B behaves in a way that strikes a particular chord with A. A process of learning then follows this initial identification.

Clinical improvement was found to correlate positively with identifications; patients, who improved, recorded twice the number of identifications compared to those, who did not change (Jeske, 1973)

The group has been describes as a 'hall or mirrors', where group members see rejected and split-off aspects of themselves in another. One could also describe the group as a hall of identifications, where empathy is an important tool. If a patient cannot be empathic with the others in the group, it will be difficult for him to survive, and in the end development will be impossible. Empathy conveys a global, undifferentiated, emotional expression of the other, merely than an intellectual understanding. Often empathy is effected by a

long row of verbal and non-verbal signs, precipitated as an impression of the other. Temporarily identification plays an important role as a provisional process, where one does not give up one's own position.

From my clinic I have noticed, that it is a common fantasy and expectation at the time of assessment, that the other group members are much more disturbed, than the person in assessment. The group can provide the new member with an opportunity to discover beyond prejudice, the nature of the 'foreign other' and membership of a genuine heterogeneous group can become an inoculation towards exclusions based on projections. That is, if the therapist is good enough.

Harold Behr (2005) wrote:

"The disowning dynamic, which is intrinsic to scapegoating, works against the climate of mutual identifications, reflective receptivity and empathy on which the group relies. To break the cycle, the conductor has to foster a spirit of empathy with the isolated group member. This means that group members, including the scapegoat, each have to be shown their part in the process and helped to re-own their projections. The attack on a potential scapegoat may revolve around disowned guilt, but it may also feature a host of other negative attributions such as disgust and shame. Underlying the process are blame, contempt and envy. On a manifest level, these can appear in many forms: over-solicitousness, avoidance of contact, verbal expressions of dislike or angry attacks."

Groups offers an exceptional possibility - a platform - to tell one's own story (the narrative), both the story known and the story unknown, - and to play and replay it in action.

The use of identification in group treatment seems to be especially rewarding in group therapy with adolescents. The young people must find their identity regarding sexuality, education and work. They go through a work of identification and develop their new adult identity. Identifications serve to give content to the Ego-ideal, and adjust the values in the superego. It is the experience, that this kind of group work demands more visible and active therapists, different from the traditional, expectant and neutral ones. The 'real' part of the relationship with the authentic therapist has become increasingly praised for its positive effect on the position of the therapist as a role model.

Events on the cultural and political scene can also elicit identification processes in the group. Stone (2001) described her group during the Clinton predicament in 1998. One woman Rita identified with Clinton. The scandal triggered her fears of exposure, punishment and guilt over her sexual behaviour. Mary identified with Monica, who had enacted some of her sexual story. Marvin, a gay man, identified with Clinton as a victim and Sara identified with Chelsea, as the child who is 'invisible'. The therapist must have in mind the possible impact of social facts and forces on the unconscious, and their manifestations in the clinical context.

Likewise do films and theatre experiences provide the group members with massive opportunities for figures to identify with, almost as a large scale projection screen. I remember my own training analyst, when I mentioned I had been to a theatre performance. You could see the excitement in his eyes, when he threw out the line: Well Kristian, what do you think Hamlet is all about?

Group analysts, as indeed all psychotherapists, have a dimension to their profession which is absent in other professions. They deal with an area which they share with their patients - the expression of psychic processes, at times conscious, more often unconscious. This is the rationale for undergoing personal therapy, a process which should lead to an understanding of one's own emotional reaction to the patient. It is important to distinguish between the real and neurotic attitudes governing the therapist's interventions. Concepts such as transference and countertransference sometimes lend themselves to the denial of real negative reactions on the part of the therapist.

Termination and identification

The question of how long training is going to continue is difficult to answer and has been the subject for numerous papers.

Freud was sceptical whether the non-traumatic neurosis could be resolved completely, - if the analysis of the transference neurosis could be terminated at all. Most agree that the psychoanalytic relationship can be terminated, when the psychoanalytic process (the capacity for self-analysis) has been internalized by the analysand.

One of the most important phases in psychoanalytic psychotherapy is of your own free will to give up the good object represented by the therapist, - in reality that is. To be able to do that completely and to mourn the loss, ending must be final and complete.

After qualification however, a newborn analyst may continue to meet his training analyst at professional meetings, may collaborate professionally in teaching, committee work and so forth, or maybe become closely identified as 'one of the main heirs and disciples' of their analyst.

Milner (1950) argues that analysts bypass the experience patients have to go through. She carefully in her article avoids the word termination and says

"Although there is perhaps no such thing as a completed analysis, most patients do, sooner or later, stop coming to analysis. Perhaps we, as analysts, are handicapped in knowing all about what ending feels like, for by the mere fact of becoming analysts, we have succeeded in bypassing an experience which our patients have to go through. We have chosen to identify ourselves with our analyst's profession and to act out that identification - a thing that our patients on the whole are not able to do".
(Extensive loans from 'Termination Reconsidered' by J. R. Pedder (1988))

Also for the analyst termination involves many different kinds of loss - the loss of the whole real object; the loss of something identified-with part of the object; the loss of a healing symbiotic relatedness; the loss of some specially pleasing role; the loss of a host of professional and therapeutic ambitions; and the loss of the analyst's dream of his or her own perfection. (Viorst, 1982)

When training analysis is to be terminated, both the trainer and the trainee are liable to experience some anxiety and uncertainty because their clinical judgement of success is inevitably affected by the issues of (future) collegueship.

Freud leaves room for the future relationship between analyst and patient can contain elements of healthy adult development. He said: "Not every good relation between an analyst and his subject during and after

analysis was to be regarded as transference; there were also friendly relations which were based on reality and which proved to be viable”.

Identification within a social community

Identifications in the mass are well known from Freud’s 1921 paper. Here he mentions the church as an example of, how a leader or an idea can form the basis for mutual identifications between members of the mass.

The group is older than the individual and the latter appear following differentiation from the foundation matrix of the group. ‘Identity’ is a relative concept that in reality is subject to constant change. Our identity, our sense of self, is threatened at times of rapid change (motor development, puberty, and adolescence, marriage, work attainment, mid-life and seniority). We retain however a sense of self that seems consistent as it is supported by a complex web of interactions, the foundation matrix (Foulkes, 1975).

In early life we were clearly dependent for our existence on some external supporting and containing social structure, the earliest being the ‘environment mother’ (Winnicott, 1960). As we mature we lose sight of the significance of the environmental mother, but it remains hidden in the social structure that provides shape and form to our self.

Each individual is a component of numerous groups, upon which he has built up his identity and ego ideal. It is difficult to describe identity without reference to one of the multiple groups to which we belong.

The belonging work group, to which we develop a dependency relationship, in our case the professional organization, is of prime importance for our individual integrity. (Prodgers, 1996)

The loss of a therapist idol

In Norway (as in Aarhus) the small groups in training are composed of trainees only.

The contact between teachers and trainees were minimized, in as so far no trainee was allowed to stay on the same hotel as the teachers, but because it was a block training, going on for 3-4 days, there were incidents of meetings outside the scheduled hours, in the escalator, at the toilets, at the buffet and so on.

The established ‘rule of abstinence’ was to bring into the therapy group any such incidences, which were felt emotionally important. Such meetings usually proved to be of major importance:

I was at the last block of my first qualifying year in the Norwegian Training Program in Oslo sixteen years ago. I stood in my best clothes at the back of a group of people, like everybody else studying a poster-drawing indicating where we were going to be seated at the gala dinner celebrating the diploma candidates. We had finished our welcome drink, and the only person behind me was the Nestor of the Norwegian teachers; a man you immediately came to admire for his calmness, kindness and thoughtfulness. He was also the one, who included me on the course after the official assessment interview, so I very much saw him as an ideal.

At lot of empty glasses were placed at a little unstable table and suddenly a very loud noise of broken glass sounded and all of us, looking at the poster, turned around to see, what had happening. The table had tipped over and pieces of glass were all over the floor. In the next one second many thoughts crossed my mind: “What a shame! This man already unable to control himself”. I then felt

sorry for his predicament and imagined how ashamed, he must be. I also readjusted my impression of him as not being without failures and at the same time forgave him and made it be an advantage for him. After the sound of broken glass had stopped, there was a split seconds silence, before his very clear and calm voice was heard by everybody: "Kristian, what have You done !".

I was totally unprepared for this mean way of making me responsible, but when I reflect on this memorable moment of my training, I think it moved the focus from helpless envy to humorous and not so dangerous rivalry or in the language of self psychology: from anxious oscillation between safe and unsafe positions to more durable, complex and less archaic self objects.

Humour is one of the most attractive and wanted human attributes. It is also always mentioned as one of the assets of a good psychotherapist.

The identity of a Group analyst

The professional world of today offers candidates for 'the impossible profession' so many different ways to practice the helping profession. It is not unusual to 'take a little of this and a little of that' on the shelves of the therapist education market. At the same time the mental health service demands a lot of different and specialized groups and is not settled for less than the best and the most approved (and evidence based) service. As it is the case elsewhere in society, our professional organizations and institutions does not as before uphold traditions and moral values. It is now expected that we find our own identity, where in the past it was divinely given or lived, for centuries in families, and transferred from generations to generation. Joining a training program usually happens at a time, where we are well beyond our youth, but still elements from the first day in school comes to mind in many first time sessions. Parallel to the personal development through therapy is - what should be the goal for the training - a development to professionally and **on your own** to conduct a group analytic group. The final proof is the making of a paper that demonstrates the integration of all skills.

The transformation from trainee to group analyst is a transformation which can be compared to the transformations from adolescent to adult.

In several societies this transformation is celebrated with a gathering, most picturesque and dramatic of course in original cultures, where the young man or woman, had to prove his or her value as a grown man. That usually means as provider and reproducer, in other words skills and courage=potency. In modern societies the rituals has become sterilized and symbolic to the point, where they have lost their original meanings.

An important milestone on the way is when you start up your own therapy group with your own patients. The special feelings around that special moment are often shared with the other trainees in the small group with pride and can become the subject of admiration, rivalry and envy. However, the first attempt with an analytic patient group often results in dropout of two or three members, - usually a blow to the initial optimism and the grandiose feeling following group start. To suffer and overcome the dropouts from ones first therapy group can be one of the trials, that constitutes what has been called the 'make- or breakpoint' of becoming a group analytic therapist (Knauss, 2000).

Others are discouraged and become critical of the 'system' or renounce on decisions about attendance or group composition already put forward in the beginning of the training.

In the small group is a notion that there are 'us', who are the teachers, usually recognized as a closed family having their own affairs, secrets, fun and dinner tables. Ideas in the small group or the large group of a church that you have to submit to in order to get your knighthood is often heard, and the idea of a secret brotherhood or mafia family organization has also been mentioned, projecting on the teachers group or the board of the Institute fantasies about power beyond justice.

When does the 'I' (trainee) and 'them' (the teachers) develop into a 'we' (group analysts)?

What constitutes the identity of a group analyst besides the worshipping of Foulkes? (it was once humorously pointed out that apparently Foulkes had to be quoted every time a presentation was made in the Society)

When do we identify ourselves as group analysts? What does the title 'diplomaed group analyst' imply?

I don't know how seriously you take titles here in Portugal? I believe more seriously than in Denmark, where it is custom not to advance or even mention formal titles and have pretty relaxed social conventions. Rooted in the Danish mentality is an inferiority complex probably well accounted for in the minor size of the country, but for some people also in the nature with no mountains and in the weather which is 'in between' or in the grey. One of our most important national poets wrote in a well known song that 'In (on) the plain, not in the blue sky' is where you have to settle down (and find your identity) (Kaalund, 1872). Furthermore we have Danish 'group law' against a person who sticks up and put forward his extraordinarity: 'You shall not believe that you are anything special' (The law of Jante; Sandemose, 1932).

Where history is (told), people gather

In Aarhus we were 'illegitimate children' of the teachers from the Copenhagen Institute who educated us back in the eighties, but left us without true acknowledgment of our capacities and disregarding our wish to build our own institute and identity as group therapists separate from Copenhagen.

This spirit of being founders and pioneers became an important drive to become '**us**' different from '**them**'. It became very important that we were a group of equals. We had all graduated from the same training programme, but initially there was segregation into 'we' who became 'teachers' and those who did not. This segregation still plays a role in the matrix of the society around the Institute.

Instead of initial bonds to the Copenhagen Institute, who for years neglected our existence, a brilliant row of supervisors from Germany, Norway and England supervised the training programme in Aarhus and gave it credibility, not to the outside world, but to ourselves.

In the Institute the identity as group analyst or group analytic therapist truly lies in the ability to handle authority. That is, when you become one yourself in your own group of patients and when you get and take authority in the society of members and associates of the institute. It is a common knowledge that peer groups seem better established and more durable, when they originate from the same year in the training programme disregarding the factual amount of knowledge possessed by each and every one in the group. Inequality in groups invites conflicts.

After 15 year the teachers group in Aarhus has still no executive committee. All eleven teachers meet every month to discuss matters of interest, from economy to intake of new trainees to announcing for new teachers.

This concept has been discussed and sometimes attacked to be a construction avoiding the issue of power in the way that some teachers had more influence than others and it would be better to have authority in visible and formal positions. Not that there is no rivalry, not that there is no envy. But what we have lost in time and conflicts, I think, we have gained in identification and openness. Especially when former trainees became teachers, it has been difficult to level out with their former teacher or therapist.

After the candidates have finished their training in Aarhus, a reception with the board of the institute is arranged to give a formal indication of their new status and to invite them into the society group around the institute. This has also been the matter of a heated discussion, how to engage the candidates in organizational work in the institute and how to keep them engaged, so they eventually could continue in training or become a teacher or a member with a bilateral relation to the institute's activities. Institutes all over Europe have different approaches to how active this inviting engagement should be from the position of the institute; - from a more orthodox analytic stand in London to a much more 'real' and 'institutionalized didactic' approach in the institute of Athens.

'Life is lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards'

said Soeren Kierkegaard, the Danish Philosopher. Narratives can only be told if they are told to others. My life formulated as a story (text) gives me and you a narrative unity of life, where I can get sight of my life's project. But unfortunately I am not the (only) writer of my life. Others can determine the premises. That's true: "... But by telling a life, which existence I do not master, I make myself a co-writer as to its meaning". (Ricoeur, 1992)

I have tried to pick up some treads in the literature and some treads in my life as a member of groups related to my profession. In most of the groups I also had a story to tell. Here, in this group I am as 'my self', as 'one self'. However, I also have a 'we' with you; - and we have a 'we-ness' with many other group analyst in Europe. My identity has changed by coming here.

Thanks for that opportunity.

