

*Giovanna Cantarella*

Dear colleagues,

at the end of the mandate as scientific secretary, I want first of all to thank you for having trusted me for a long time in this role.

Time has arrived to continue to be active in EATGA as a member, no longer in official roles. The person who will cover the scientific secretary role will give new lymph to EATGA.

In these years we have all witnessed and admired the vitality of an Association, a rare one, capable of elaborating inner conflicts, of living creatively cultural differences not only objectifying them as a research topic. Capable, most in institutional process, to share, discuss, tolerate (suspending doubts, waiting for reality exam) members' different conceptions on workshop's frameworks, staff members, rules due to different scientific coordinates derived from different cultural belonging. We have all gone through perplexities, strong criticisms, uncertainties. We have overcome them, having in mind that a lively institution needs to catch social change, to be able to catch how changing times influence scientific settings and to integrate them in the institutional praxis.

Marsala workshop has offered us the occasion for processing inside EATGA our different conceptions and elaborate them. We hope we will have other occasions like Marsala.

Though we all know how increasingly difficult it is to find economical, institutional, personal energies (beside affective investment in EATGA) for facing the enormous work needed by such complex events as our intercultural workshops are. We all are very thankful to Ruvolo and Profita for their engagement and capacity to accept criticisms.

## **OUR PRESENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE**

Thanks to the active participation of members and to the competence of its board, EATGA has consolidated its presence in the international stage. Most grateful we all are to our President, the well renowned scientific "ambassador" who has granted the quality of our scientific life and public image.

EATGA has been able to renew and regain a role which we hoped to reach.

The two papers Kurt Husemann and Giuseppe Ruvolo/ Gabriele Profita have presented in the IAGP 2009 Congress in Rome had the success and resonance they deserved. The audience, (though the time of our symposium was most "unhappy", in the last hours of the Congress, when participants were most exhausted by the long work and suffocating heat of Rome) expressed the disappointment for not having had time to discuss the issues raised in the papers, understand methodology, approach, hypothesis and outcome of our workshops.

In the Newsletter Velia Ranci is now editing you will read and appreciate them.

Those of us who could not come to the scientific meeting in London (November 7, 2009)

will be able to read in the Newsletter the report Mary Spreng has prepared for us, overcoming the difficulties of reporting a “brainstorming” process.

We need now to continue and consolidate these results. Steadily increasing new members make EATGA an “institution in progress”.

I hope members will tell us their ideas on EATGA research, on our activities, on the issues raised by Kaës conference on “How to approach transculturality today” in Aix en Provence 2009 Study Day.

From my part, I only point out a few of the many issues raised in our meeting, papers, workshops:

- Kaës conference on his exploration and research on the psychic consistency of culture, the major psychic functions accomplished by culture

- the role of intergenerational dynamics raised in Budapest workshop, continued in Marsala workshop. The influence of generational issues in the large group setting

- the complexity of a question which has become visible in Marsala.

Ruvolo and Profita raise the hypothesis of a difficulty, impossibility of symbolizing, objectifying the context in which the workshop’s framework is installed (in Ruvolo/Profita paper, this newsletter: point 1 “some considerations”).

This hypothesis struck me and resonated when in Rome IAGP group analysis’ large group went through long and strong conflictuality. Participants continued to drop interventions aimed at bringing into consideration the role of external forces like IAGP organisation and went continuously back to relational conflicting differences inside the large group.

Another “context” we too often cancel is the geographical context, our common land.

- Kurt Husemann work has explored the role of memory from a psychodynamic point of view. The function of memory in the groupanalytical and transcultural processes starting from the analysis of present and past EATGA workshops. “Memory as an act of constant dissociation, so that what is behind doesn’t come back “. But also the deconstructive function of memory. Most important the part of the paper devoted to destructivity in human minds, in human exchanges and its exploration in the large groups in our workshops (In the incoming newsletter Husemann paper)

A contribution to deeper reflection and understanding, a contribution to share and keep alive the memory of EATGA scientific life and history.

Kurt Husemann investment in EATGA has been always so precious, supportive, stimulating.

I have thought I could give my contribution to the institutional memory, especially to new members enclosing here part of a past EATGA report (Cantarella 2005) illustrating the development of scientific lines in EATGA up to 2005.

With my warmest greetings,

Giovanna Cantarella

## DEVELOPMENTAL LINES of EATGA-AEATG RESEARCH THEMES

EATGA-AEATG scientific main objective, since its foundation in 1982, is stated in its status. It was and it is to study and research on the function of culture in group, individual and institutions, on the cultural foundations of individual identity.

EATGA-AEATG has always fulfilled its scientific objectives by means of a specific methodology, still unique in times when many institutions and professional associations had to turn, to face the intercultural issues EATGA-AEATG has faced long before.

Its methodology is to carry on its scientific research not objectifying cultural issues but being personally involved as participants to EATGA-AEATG intercultural workshops.

New EATGA-AEATG generations will find an accurate report on the history of EATGA-AEATG intercultural workshops since Maastricht 1985 ( Heidelberg, Oxford, Paris, Koszeg, Fiesole ) in 2001 nr. 8 Newsletter's article "Reflections on EATGA Yesterday and Tomorrow" by Dennis Brown. We have lost Dennis Brown but we have with us his precious contributions to the Association scientific life.

Since Maastricht the specificity of our workshops dispositif granted the participants the occasion to explore, within small and large groups dynamics, their own emotional reactions to the traumatic situation of loosing one's own cultural reference points when confronting with participants belonging to different cultures and languages. The traumatic situation allowed to become aware of the cultural unconscious elements incorporated in the matrix of cultural group identity: the group of primary belonging (Rouchy, Connexion 1990 - 1).

The large group dynamics (with no official translation) were precious stimulus for participants (speaking their own European language) to explore exclusion and inclusion dynamics, centripetal and centrifugal group forces, power issues related to the knowledge of foreign languages.

EATGA-AEATG workshops had since the beginning an exciting success, they offered occasions of "touching" how traumatic social wounds due to wars, religions and ethnic conflicts, decades after the official ending, were still alive and vivid in the memory of protagonist as profound wounds in individual, familiar and national histories.

We faced then the problem of human destructivity, of its longlasting consequences through generations. These wounds needed elaboration in a social setting in order to avoid unconscious transgenerational transmission of cultural unelaborated incorporates. Parallely the annual Study Days have offered a "container" for thinking together, for emotionally sharing the cultural topics coming to the foreground.

Our institutional changes, the evolvement of our "belonging" to the Association were themselves a powerful cultural issue, with its resonances with the opening of European boundaries. The problem of transgenerational transmission was powerfully lived also inside the Association with the rising conflictual need of opening to new generations ( Milan 2001 Study Day "Transmission and Comprehension. Innovation or Repetition" ).

Study Day titles trace back the history of our institutional and scientific evolvement. Institutional problems of generational transmission had made us focus on the necessity

of rethinking to our institutional belonging, to the new aims and objectives coming to foreground according to our.

We reflected on social and institutional conflicts trusting in the positive solution.

Social trust was the issue explored. The theme of religious and ethical values in our religious upbringing. The function of religion, the necessity of integrating religious values into social values (Zurich 2002 Study Day "Social Trust Hope"). We acknowledged that societies which don't integrate religious values are in danger of collapsing. It was then the time for EATGA-AEATG to write its ethical code, the guidelines for EATGA-AEATG functionnaires.

We reflected on the role of leaders, as representing the highest ethical values, answering to the common need of granting a safe context (2003 London Study Day "Illusion and Hope. The Collapse of Trust in Groups and Society").

The methodology of our research slowly evolved. In the beginning our focus was on the intercultural incorporates in individuals identities, on the influence of culture in group processes.

The scientific themes were: "The Intercultural (differences between national cultures) and the Transcultural (shared, common, universal, human themes as birth, life, death, acknowledgment of generational and sex differences, the inevitability of the passing of time, etc.)". The hypothesis was that culture was to be explored inside relationships.

We then evolved and hypothesized that culture could be explored also approaching directly to the social context. Social Dreaming allowed to explore culture not only through individuals' incorporates or group processes but through the social connections and links created by free associations to dreams offered in the Social Dreaming Matrix.

The research on the cultural basis of our profession as therapists was progressing parallelly: cultural transference, cultural countertransference when confronting with migrants (Cologne 2000 Study Day). Fiesole 1999 workshop was focused on the exploration of the cultural influence on the professional self. For the first time we focused on the "instituted" groups of secondary belonging. On professional cultural differences and commonalities.

New developments are ahead in EATGA-AEATG. Europe and European boundaries have opened.

"Europe as a container !?. EATGA-AEATG as a container ?!" was the title of 2004 Brussels Study Day. We need elaborating and researching on the contribution of groupanalysis to the comprehension and promotion of networks of belonging (Berlin 2005 Study Day).

Giovanna Cantarella  
Milano, 15 febbraio 2005