

I was traveling on foot on a holy pilgrimage with my son last May from Porto to Santiago de Compostela. On the way through the beautiful Galician landscape I had a lot of time to contemplate about many things, so during that journey I had also some thoughts about my experiences with European Association for Transcultural Group Analysis.

## 1. 1. *European*

What is Europe or European? The first word is also maybe the most problematic. So what in our work is European? We have discussed about what happens, when people from different European countries meet. That brings forth history, recent or distant wars, traumatic national memories, similarities, differences, what one can feel or recognize, what one can't see or identify with.

What is Europe and what is not? We have discussed a lot about refugees in Europe. There are refugees from other European countries and refugees from outside Europe. When we divide people to Europeans and non-Europeans, we don't see any more clearly enough the internal differences in Europe. The historical changes in Europe have been vast during the time that Eatga has existed. Is Europe same as NATO, where is Warsaw Pact? Is Finland part of Europe? We still say in Finland, that somebody is going to Europe, when we mean, that he is traveling to Central Europe, the most central point to at least to me is Paris, for some it may be today Brussels. Is Russia part of Europe? In my geography book in school Europe ended to Ural Mountains. But surely Europe is just not only geography; it must also be a state of mind, something that is inside your head. Maybe it is our common Christian history. In Greek mythology Princess Europe was stolen from Middle-East, so who are we after all?

## 1. 2. *Association*

I believe that man is naturally social being, he is born in group. If physical distances between individuals are too long, it makes group formation problematic. If we think about Europe and about its borders, it is difficult to have a group if borders are very far and even obscure.

Members of our association have many obligations, other associations, daily work, all of which divert and limit our energy to work in Eatga.

The visual part of our work is our regular gatherings. In these we exchange energy, thoughts, information, but in them also new associations are born. With these new associations each and every one of us can continue thinking and working to new directions when again back home. The Group is an associative state of being, which allows development in many directions.

We are many members in Eatga so there are many ways to be a member, to participate and to use Eatga ideas. Every one of us takes Eatga ideas to new forums, discussions and clinical

situations. And even more important, the ideas come back to Eatga maybe a little modified to enrich our work further and so it continues.

We are not so many in Eatga, usually 20 to 30 members in our meetings. It is not much compared to the whole population of 500 million of Europe. But our work is scientific study and not a project to save and heal whole Europe, although there are also such strivings at least in group analytic circles.

Coming together is difficult; on the other hand we have a deep yearning to do so, but on the other hand joining with others puts our personality structure under a great strain and gives us the possibility to change. Not many are willing to risk their normal equilibrium at least not very often, some are willing to take the risk themselves occasionally, some never. So Eatga is obviously not for everybody.

As we know from psychotherapy, people resist change, although they ask for it. Eatga could be an example for people around us, that it is possible to meet continuously, to co-operate and to change. Association or coming together is a continuing process, old associations loosen or give possibilities to new ones, and we have in our hands through our work always a fresh new Association.

### 1. 3. *for*

What is Eatga for? The founders had their idea about it. For me very fitting felt the idea about Eatga and its work that came up when we last met in Berlin (March 2010). The important idea was that Eatga is not for anything useful, e.g. it is for nothing. Our work has an object but no meaning. This idea was very liberating for me. This non-usefulness is the core concept of so called academic freedom or in the psychotherapeutic situation the transitional space. For the useful everyday mind this useless international meeting of minds may seem as the worst case of waste of time. What is the point in traveling to other side of Europe for nothing? This paradox of pointlessness is like the name “Nobody” Odysseus took when running away the island of Cyclopes. We give pointlessness or non-usefulness as a description of an endeavor that is death serious as it was for Odysseus, but at the same time it gives us protection from powerful destructive forces. So Eatga is not getting that kind of interest and internal struggles as for example psychotherapeutic field. We are not free from troubles, but they appear in different and maybe milder forms in our field of pointlessness, called Eatga.

### 1. 4. *Transcultural*

Transcultural means literally something going through culture, so it is different from intercultural, something between cultures. Intercultural would appear easier to apply with problems, when people from different countries and assumable from different cultures meet and interact. This concept analysis gets more difficult and gets deeper, if we try to define what culture means in transcultural. What do we mean, when we say culture? Language? Nationality? Different customs? Manners? Religious rituals? Eating habits? Ways to express oneself? Culture basically contains our ways to feel and act in the whole historical context of the community in which we have been raised. What do we “Europeans” have culturally in common? Ancient Greek and the Roman Empire? Christianity? Latin? Wars? Age of

Discovery? Renaissance? Industrial and Scientific Revolution? Wine, Beer, Sausage, Mozart, Verdi, Britten, Dante, Shakespeare, Proust? We Europeans have so much in common. Where is the problem, what keeps us together and what separates us? One obvious problem is language. Europe has maybe 50 official languages. Unofficial languages and dialects are countless; we have many “professional” languages, social classes have their own languages. Languages help us to see and understand the world around us, but they define also the things we don’t see and understand. So what is transcultural, where is it, is it the way we exist and live in and relate to the world?

### 1. 5. *Group*

The human mind is created in group, so is language, thoughts and concepts. In Eatga our working method is working in groups. We have also individual efforts like this paper or the papers given in the beginning of our Study Days. Crucial in these individual efforts is whether they are useful, inspirational or mediating new ideas. I have understood that the scientific evidence about the usefulness of giving lectures does not exist. So as a group person I am in favor of full and total use of groups in any intellectual endeavor. Of course we need individual reading, writing and thinking, but when Eatga calls people together, then as a “group” society we must use groups in the fullest capacity. Using groups allows more colorful view on culture that is possible for a single person. A groupish idea is that group members bring with them their basic and societal groups. In this sense we get in our work in Eatga the same elements, changes, thoughts and difficulties that exist in Europe in the whole. Europe has been and is at the very moment going through very comprehensive changes on many levels. The central place for discussions (se mesou (gr.)) has been created around Brussels. The goal in ancient Greek at the root of European thought in the Ionian city state was a society (koinonia) of citizens of equal worth and equal power which meets and decides about common matters in an open place (agora). To me it seems that Eatga is that kind of collection of people, which wants to leave itself open to change, uncertainty, feelings, unknown and trivial, all in all a group open to great frustration. All new recruits are welcome! Occasionally one can sense in our group a hunch of something new and a understanding the world at the very present moment.

### 1. 6. *Analysis*

What does “analysis” mean in Eatga context? Does it mean psychoanalysis or group analysis or something else? My own orientation in this matter at the moment is group analysis with strong sociological flavor. I hope it is noticeable in my texts. In Eatga we use mostly psychoanalytical language and concepts. The same is evident in group analytical literature and on the psychoanalytical field it is self evident of course.

But what is this analysis that is always spoken of? What is this analytical method that we say we use? Do we reach to anything new or do we just memorize those concept constellations that we learned in therapy training seminars following the best possible traditions. Because Eatga has as its work target “transculturality” in Europe, it may well be that for this purpose new kind of concepts and theories are needed. Creating them is heavy work and those doing this kind of labor need special kind of freedom and creativity in order to allow the new and

fragile ideas to come forth.

1. 7. ***Pilgrimage***

A pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is possible a very typical phenomenon in present day Europe. Its full meaning is difficult to define but somehow it is telling us a truly important lesson about ourselves. Is it about history, is it about religion, is it about exercise and health, or is it about spiritual searching or feeling of emptiness? What is the meaning of it all? To me it is first of all a holy and societal event and you can feel it amongst the people on the road and you can see it in the eyes of local people by the road. Eatga is like a pilgrimage, heavy and long journey, where being on the road gives you the best views and the most valuable lessons.

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