

REPORT OF THE LARGE GROUP AT EATGA STUDY DAY BERLIN 13 th March 2010

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I was asked to give a report of the closing Large Group in Berlin this year. Let me write just some words about the context, mainly for those who could not participate. The Study Day theme “Living Transculturality: losses and gains” was introduced on Friday evening by Silvia Amati-Sas about “Prejudice” and the Berlin ethnopsychiatrist Ernestine Wohlfart about “dissociative states in African patients”. Mrs. Wohlfart participated also in 2 Medium Groups, she appreciated EATGA work and wants to come back.

We know how much the surrounding context influences our discussions. This time most important was the amazing home in which Kurt Husemann received us on Saturday and Sunday: a Funeral Chapel in a green cemetery. A sophisticated conversion of the building made us step down into the basement, in the therapy rooms. There, our first Medium Group was received by a slight but overbearing bleep, which even Kurt could neither diagnose nor locate or influence. Spirits, graves and religious questions arose in our groups more than usual. A kind of 5th dimension surrounded us – which seems to me a characteristic of transcultural thinking.

In his Report of the 1. Medium Group, Christoph Rosenberger described, that during their 3 sessions they proceeded from the surface to more and more deeper views, going “down to the graves”, from where they finally “rose up alive!”

In a friendly atmosphere the lectures of Friday evening were reviewed. The theory of Prejudice was illustrated by some cases. E.g. the daughter of a Nazi perpetrator evoke a prejudice of negative feelings: “monster woman”. The group tried to create an “internal space” with “free floating attention”. The “dialogue by acting” (Klüwer) was discussed.

Mrs. Wohlfart, participating in the 2. session, answered to many questions with a high presence, as if she was on the “hot chair”. She spoke of the dissociative states of her African group patients, and also described her own retroamnesia after her aneurisma operation. Other examples of brain problems were discussed. Wohlfart understands her function in a therapeutic Group as assuring a safety room in the sense of Foulkes. She underlines that she is not providing help, and not being a “healer”, even when the Africans project this on her.

From the “spirits” in Africa, the group turned to our relations to dead persons or guardian angels, and to different forms of graves: in the earth, water, air, and other “resting places”. In Italy cemeteries close, others can be visited, e.g. famous graves. Films on mortality (“Eyes wide shut”) were mentioned, and Elias Canetti “Mass and Mankind”. What do we think about veneration of ancestors, awakening stories, or the contact with a dead in a “nowhere land”? Mrs. Wohlfart rejected to work with “forces of death”.

As both lecturers of Friday evening were involved personally in the discussion, many essential themes were worked through in this Medium Group.

Laszlo Kruppa donnait le rapport du 2e Groupe Moyen en Français:

Dans la 1ère séance Mme Wohlfart participait. Depuis ses années de travail au Sénégal et Maroc elle connaît l'importance du monde invisible.

Le discours dans notre groupe pouvait se comprendre comme la reprise de rétextualisation entre Psychanalyse et Religion. On discutait sur les religions qui “tuent le fils” (Abraham–Isaac, Jésus). Le complexe d’Oedipe de Freud est en même temps individuel et mythe collectif. Malcolm souligne que l’Oedipe est patricide aussi. Wohlfart remarque que dans l’Islam il n’y a pas de fils de dieu, Allah est le Super-père.

L’importance des ancêtres compte pour toutes les cultures. Wohlfart donne l’exemple d’une patiente du Kenia qui, devenue chrétienne, tombait dans un état dissociatif pour avoir trahit ses ancêtres. La culpabilité n’est pas une “spécialité” allemande. Dans les cultures on trouve des sadismes, des enfants abusés, des problèmes de générations ...

La discussion focussait sur la balance entre intérieur et extérieur. Par le focus intérieur on néglige le socio-politique. Giovanna souligne que les patients isolés trouvent une matrix sociale dans la thérapie de Groupe. A sa question sur le développement du processus groupal Wohlfart répond qu’elle ne comprend pas son rôle comme devant changer les patients ! Apparemment elle a tiré cette conséquence de ses expériences de longue durée; le groupe Africain venait depuis 7 ans. Toivola constate que le traitement psychosomatique aussi peut prendre de très longues années, “pas autre moyen”. Parlant des cadres différents de groupes, on apprend que Mme Wohlfart, chef d’un service universitaire, peut choisir ses patients et donc a des patientes plutôt privilégiées.

Kruppa termine son rapport avec la remarque qu’il trouvait difficile d’être observateur silencieux.

In the following general discussion we concluded that both Medium Groups worked close to the topic. Kurt, also Conductor of the final Large Group, confirmed that in these converted rooms all the patients come more directly in deep processes.

Malcolm spoke of his personal history, losses and gains, beginning in Moscow.

Then history of EATGA was discussed, the loss of members; board is growing, but members diminish. How can we think the future of EATGA and the transition to younger people, living in a different world? An opening to the “outside”, like in Budapest-Workshop, or with the participation of Mrs. Wohlfart, brings a good lively input.

Kurt means that as European Association we are more confronted with us, and have more difficulty to contain, as if we look far away, e.g. to Africa - (I don’t agree).

(Meanwhile we have the interesting paper of Toivola, see 1. “European”)

Silvia stresses not to accept the destructive projections on us! Discuss EATGA is useless – and therefore it is psychoanalytic. About the discussion on our “use”, she adds that to be “useless” means our psychoanalytic aspect in the sense that psychoanalytic attitude has no precise objective.

Malcolm: So what is our use?
(see Toivola 3.”for”)

Follows a discussion about “we have an impact” (Mary). The world is in our transcultural concept, which is transitionality, that means a moving thing. Ruth: We can move for us and for patients. Kurt: Our essential is the transcultural (e.g. as Strachwitz discussed it about Group silence).

Giovanna emphasizes the lot of interesting work already done and not to lose !

I will summarize that in this Study Day we lived clearly both: the earthly and the life-death dimension, the experienced and the sublimated, the “through” and the “beyond” in EATGAs transcultural questions.

(Perhaps specially the human need for “sublimation” must be added to Toivola’s 4.”Transcultural”).
