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The Importance of Being Patient

The evident ambiguity in the title of my paper may indicate, that my considerations about the topic of the conference are pointing in different directions, although there is an effort to find some common and basic denominators.

Several years ago a female patient at the end of her satisfactory analysis and at the end of the very last session took her leave with the remark: "If it is forbidden or not, I want to thank you for all the work you have done with me with this little present" and she handed over to me a package apparently containing a book. As a matter of fact it was a book, strictly speaking the novel "The Discovery of Slowness" by Sten Nadolny.

At the time, when this happened, that means still in our present time, my analysand may have expressed with borrowed words, that she had *re*-discovered slowness by her analysis and simultaneously perceived one of the cores of the Freudian practice, which had begun with patient listening to everything that patients said, a slow and cautious procedure lasting longer and longer, when some authoritarian and suggestive tendencies of the original master slowly volatilized and when deeper states of regression and thoroughly done working-through were considered as indispensable in order to get satisfactory results of understanding and healing neurotic harm and psychic suffering, especially for the treatment of more severely disturbed patients.

In correlation to the silence of the voice of intellect, which at last will be heard, as Freud characterised the sublime agent of his revealing procedure, slowness and patience are necessary conditions of all attempts and discourses striving for truth and enlightenment, and as psychoanalysis in its various forms of application is one of the most important projects for these efforts, slowness, patience, veraciousness and decidedness are essential parts of its prominent traits and values.

But as well as all the other discourses of truth and "Aufklärung", psychoanalysis too has lost its sociopolitical importance during the last decades, being replaced step by step by other general mentalities, which are not interested in revealing hidden agendas, latent significations and unconscious motivations in micro- and macro-political spheres. The frequent debasements psychoanalysis is subjected to and its

labelling of a phase-out model, stemming not only from its usual adversaries, is not so much related to the obsolescence being expressed by Marcuse in 1963, when he marked the inappropriateness of psychoanalytic theories geared to the bourgeois and paternalistic social structures in the face of a so-called fatherless society. Moreover in our present economistic "event-society" (Schultz) we are confronted with attacks to the obsolete mandate of psychoanalysis, which announces rather the extension of autonomy, emancipation and thinking in historical dimensions than material welfare and consumption-oriented happiness. What psychoanalysis can promise is somewhat in the order of loss, of disillusionment, of acceptance of lacks and imperfection, questionable virtues which do not fit to the actual aims of gaining more aptitudes, more spirituality, more emotionality, which we can find in the catalogues of promises of all the other contemporary psychotherapies and institutions of well-being and fitness.

In the case of psychoanalysis related to its application as group-analysis we can notice a further obstacle for a broader acceptance in society – and, as far as I can see, not only in the middle European regions being more familiar to me. This confinement has its roots in an additional factor of the already mentioned general changing of mentality related to the decline of social and political categories. Social psychology and history of the psyche teach us, that fantasies and psychic structures are trans-individual and historically determined. In this perspective modifications of socialising conditions correspond to modified types of socialisation, which can be defined by dominant characteristic traits. Since the 1970s we can remark two important paradigm shifts, namely the "narcissistic type" on the one hand and the "telematic-postmodern type" on the other hand.

We remember, that the 1960s were determined by struggles against a generation of parents, who had not only participated in the cruelties of national socialism and the Second World War, but also were responsible for later wars and disasters like Vietnam, struggles combined with a high cathexis on socio-political categories as leading values and virtues and therefore with an awareness of responsibility not only for oneself but also for the community. Widely spread group experiences with a variety of t-groups and many types of group-psychotherapy beside group analysis were some of the consequences of the new orientation. At the peak-level of the famous psycho-boom in this time Irvin Yalom could list more than 200 different forms of group psychotherapy in the Californian region and I remember statements by

German psychoanalytic institutions, that individual psychoanalysis should be confined to training analysis, whereas therapeutic goals were to be pursued by group-analysis in order to distribute the benevolent impacts of psychoanalysis in a fair minded and democratic way.

In the 1970s however the ideal figure of "Narcissus" was coming to the fore brushing aside more and more the former educational ideals of emancipation, self-determination, political mindedness and solidarity. Some sociologists like Thomas Ziehe in Germany or Christopher Lasch in the USA published books about puberty and narcissism and announced the era of narcissism, before Haesing, Stubenrauch and Ziehe posed the question: "Narcissus. A new Type of Socialisation?" defining the new character of the young generation with the following traits:

- a weak identification with the parental representatives
- an omnipotent ego-ideal with its enlargement to the cosmic
- the repression of feelings of guilt
- the striving for immediate satisfaction
- and the avoidance of hurt by a withdrawal into the inner world in order to support the extreme vulnerable self-esteem.

However by taking account more recent psycho-sociological and cultural investigations this type of socialisation was replaced step by step by a new character called the "telematic" or "postmodern" type, stemming from the "telematic world revolution" as announced by the philosopher Willem Flusser more than two decades ago, when in a paradigm-shift the culture of the logic of the text was subverted by an iconic-turn. Whereas the process of civilization was marked by the passage from the magic of images to linear scripture with the development of alphanumerical codes, one could now observe the opposite procedure. However the change from the conceptual to the imaginary was rather leading to new forms of scripture and textual communication than to the end of dialogue and discourse as it is indicated by significant changes in literature as well as by the explosion of new texts in chat rooms, Multi User Dungeons, News Groups and e-mails.

Under the influence of the telematic mentality the amazing progress of communication-technology and the construction of a world-wide-network led on the one hand to a vanishing border between the interior and the exterior with the "spectacular decline of the intimate life", as stated by Julia Kristeva in her book "New Maladies of the Soul" of 1995, and the dissolution of established identities on the

other hand, harmful and disturbing for many, but also leading to a liberating feeling of being able to live simultaneously in different worlds for those, who are cyborgs, chatters and "mudders", skilful in the use of the internet and often being drowned in its infinitely seeming world.

In contrast to the narcissistic type, who retreated into intimacy in order to protect the weak core of his ego from the threatening influence of reality the telematic subject seems to suffer less from the difficulties of boundary, as for him the categories of inside and outside become more and more obsolete. In this perspective Slavoj Zizek refers to an "externalisation of the hard core of subjectivity", leading into the same direction as Julia Kristeva's statement of the "abolishment of the psychic space".

It is quite obvious, that findings like these together with the above mentioned general changes in mentality, subjectivity, social identities, philosophy of conscience and forms of communication have a considerable impact on the work and the self-conception of psychoanalysis and group analysis as well as in the domain of practice as in the field of theory and clinical understanding. As a matter of fact one of the consequences of "telematic" and "postmodern" mentality can be detected in an offence on the settings of our psychotherapeutic efforts. Whereas subjects fitting to the narcissistic type with a demand of psychotherapy preferred to take refuge in the intimate and protected shelter of individual treatment instead of undergoing potentially harmful and frustrating group-experiences, the "telematic" subjects are trying to avoid both settings in its usual forms by attempts to modify the analytic relationship and its genuine communication within their classic frames. Until recently the IPA for example was obliged to change the rules of training analysis only for countries and regions, where there were no possibilities for trainees to undergo a formation of psychoanalysis in an ordinary way. In the meantime we can state an increasing demand of irregular forms of analysis such as remote analysis, phone analysis or skype analysis by patients searching analytic treatment, where there is no lack of usual psychoanalytic possibilities. And on the other hand we can notice numerous chat-rooms, where a kind of self-experience is fostered seeming to be a substitute for experiences in group-analysis. In both cases usual therapeutic settings are often considered as old fashioned, inappropriate to actual standards of wellbeing and psychic health, not fitting into an every day's life with its struggles against time, stress and speed, hiding by this the fearful avoiding of real intersubjective relationships outside of partial contacts. In the new spaces obviously necessary

anonymity is guaranteed by the partial impact of the subject reduced to a voice or to a written text.

As far as theory and clinical understanding is concerned the above mentioned abolishment of the psychic space in telematic mentality has to be considered as a challenge to the core of psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity and personality, whose efforts have always tended to maintain the difference between the interior and the exterior regarding the function of the ego as an intermediary between the two spheres. In this perspective, psychoanalysis and group analysis with their effort to influence neurotic disorders in its usual therapeutic field have always been dealing with dialectic subjects, being able to preserve the oppositional spaces and tendencies of the psyche in a third observing, experiencing and judging instance with a limited freedom of actions, attitudes and more or less predictable behaviour. On the contrary the "telematic" subject seems to be forced – or shall we say to be able? - to bear different synchronic identities and to function on a digital level and on a zero-or-one basis, which is in ostentatious increase correlated to clinical descriptions such as diffusion of identity and splitting of representations concerning either good or bad objects and either good or bad parts of the self in various psychic disorders namely in the so-called borderline personality disorders, whose state as an autonomous clinical structure, as a transitional form between neurotic, perverse and psychotic structure or as an incorrect diagnosed hysterical disorder cannot be discussed here.

Under these conditions the importance of being patient in analytic working seems to be the analysts' necessity of being aware of the border between the so-called normal and the so-called psychopathological in their relationship to new types of human subjectivity and "new maladies of the soul" (in Kristeva´s sense) on the one hand and on the other hand to find a neutral position between an enthusiastic affirmation of changes in individual and collective mentality and in the organisation of unusual arrangements of social relationships and – otherwise - apocalyptic feelings and fantasies about the decline of traditional values and the loss of familiar psychosocial structures in the domains of identities respectively sexual identities, in the creation of new partnerships and familial complexes, supported by altered ideologies and philosophies of life. So we have to take into consideration new „normality-models" of psychic disorders just as Freud contrasted mourning to melancholia, dreams to psychotic hallucinations, slips to neurotic symptoms and so on. If psychoanalysis in its various therapeutic applications, techniques and settings consists in the

investigation of unconscious motivations of human attitudes and acts, respectively those which can claim the value of symptoms or cause conditions of sufferings and complaints and if these findings are put forth with the intention to remove or to reduce them according to Freud's "linking of exploring and healing" by a careful and preferably exhaustive traversing of their unconscious phantasmatic fundaments, we are often confronted with the fact, that this model would not function in a satisfactory way with many of our patients, above all, for those of our younger patients, who suffer rather from "alexithymia" than from "romantic love" (Paul Verhaeghe).

Among the advantages of group analysis compared to individual analysis the experiences in collective therapy settings can show better the social modifications with their impact on the maintenance or on the loss of the individuals' psychic balance, provided that the heterogeneity of the group is able to procure a stage mirroring actual social affairs. For this reason trainees in group analysis can benefit from participating in therapeutic groups as "normal" group members during their training, which provides an important and supplementary condition for better understanding clinical material in contrast to collectivity-related ego-syntonic traits of character and personality. However, approaches to knowledge and experience for trainees in such arrangements are often problematic and conflict-laden, and can disturb the group processes in different ways. Thereby the importance of being patient is getting quite a different significance, as well as for the trainees as for the whole group.

A long time ago, when I was beginning my formation in psychoanalysis, group analysis and psychodrama the identity of a psychoanalyst, his self-esteem and the extent of his competence was somehow different from nowadays – at least in German speaking countries. The opinion, that a psychoanalyst when having finished his training should be able to bring in his analytic attitude and his skills in various fields outside of the classical couch-setting without a specialised education. One of the exceptions was however child-psychoanalysis. So I remember that one of my German analytic teachers also practised psychoanalytic group psychotherapy successfully, having learned the method only by participating as a simple member in a therapeutic group of a colleague. In the meantime self-authorisation in this way has become obsolete and also dangerous in consideration of the high specialisations in our field, accompanied by more or less severe governmental supervision and its rules and laws concerning psychotherapeutic education and practice. As a remnant of this

era I always recommend – as many of us do, I suppose – to trainees of group analysis, that at least partially their obligatory self experience should be fulfilled in clinical groups together with members, whose aim of group participation is purely a therapeutic one. Therefore, in my own psychotherapeutic groups, the regular attendance of one or two trainees mostly seeking education in group analysis is very often an important challenge for all the participants and the analyst and the need to be patient is meaningful in several respects.

For a further description and explanation I should expose some guidelines for my procedure in group analysis. I am usually working with slow-open-groups, existing for many years, even going back to the beginnings of my group-activities, and although I am trying to assemble comparable groups with a heterogeneous composition of members in each one – a little bit according to the principle of Noah's Ark - , of course the groups are showing a tendency to develop different attitudes and cultures due to unpredictable clusters of certain characters and forcing me to give them metaphorical names such as "the artists", "the Nesthocker/the nidiculous birds" or "the show-ensemble". My style of interpretation is a result of different influences of theories and self-experiences, not really sticking to a certain school, somewhat flexible according to special needs and processes in the group, exploiting rather frequently one of the sublime defence (or solution?) mechanisms, that groups can offer, namely the use of humour, being also aware of the danger of its misuse. Partially following a conception of Klaus Frank, besides the basic rule the group is confronted with the second rule, that an appointed seat is always ascertained for the leader. This arrangement I regard as very useful in furnishing important indicators for latent group-relationships especially for the dynamics of the basic transference.

The following schematic may show that the fixed position of the leader and the free choice of all the other seats in the room create a stable arrangement of the most important constituents of communication and relationships in a group:
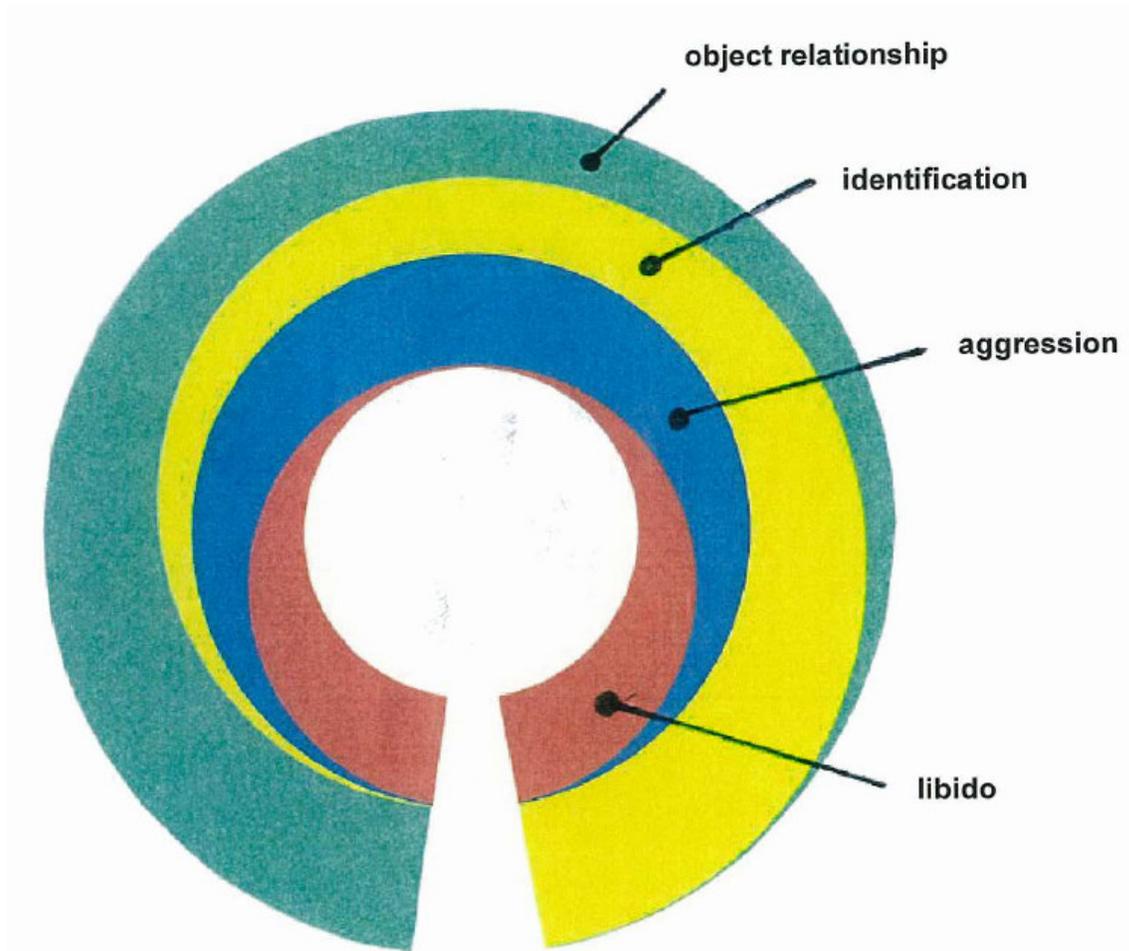
By the way, in my conception this structure of emotional and relational group elements is mirroring the basic mechanism of the articulated human language: language can only function, if one signifier (Lacan's master-signifier) is fixed and has no other meaning than for itself (which is, at the same time, no meaning at all), then all the other signifiers are getting significance.

Related to a group process the fixing of the leader's seat is the introduction of the symbolic father and the installation of the law from the beginning of the common collective experience. So the conscious or mostly unconscious choice of one of the other seats is confronting the group member with his relationship to the law and to the authority and may contribute to show him love, hate or distrust with regard to the parental couple and his rivalry with his "siblings".

Without being able to present results of systematic empirical investigation there is some evidence about changes in transferential processes in my groups compared to

my experiences many years ago. I have noticed that the positions near to my right or left side are more often avoided or remain empty during the whole session, if group members are absent. According to the above described narcissistic type of socialisation a lack of interest in working out conflicts with the leader is in contrast to struggles and battles between the members, especially between men and women, who seem to have lost or never have had tendencies of seduction and feelings of attraction, tenderness and love for each other.

On the other hand the positions of stronger identification with the leader are more often occupied by female members, whereas at the left position of the leader we can find more frequently male individuals, both phenomena apparently indicating the influence of shifts in gender-identity.

As far as the presence of trainees in these therapeutic groups is concerned, their participation is of course an important source of resistance and distrust, of aggressive and paranoid feelings of the rest of the group, as soon as their double identity is detected, even if they humbly and modestly justify their aim of being in the group as a mainly therapeutic one. This importance of being a patient without really being regarded as such may give cause to many trainees to withdraw from active participation in the process and to look for a protected coin in the group, where they seem to wait patiently for the end of the session or often for the end of their "treatment". Being in fact not always far away from the personality structures of the "real" patients, especially in regard to a vulnerable self-esteem and to a fear of working out conflicts, the trainee´s unpleasant and sometimes unbearable situation often gives raise to latent aggressiveness directed towards the leader, who is secretly accused for having brought them in such conditions. So they frequently take the seat in opposition to the leader, keeping this place of the murderer for a long time, being like Hamlet, who cannot decide to fulfil the desired and necessary act, whereas in former times of my group experiences trainees seem to have more frequently chosen the position on the right hand of the leader, which might have enabled other members of the group to commit the symbolic murder of the father. This business, by the way, is actually more often carried out by female members.

Finally the importance of being patient means for the leader, that he must carefully and slowly proceed in his work of unveiling also the additional unconscious dynamics stemming from the difficult task of combining training and treatment in order to procure a better understanding of clinical material.