

COMMUNITY AND GROUP DASEINS ANALYSIS.

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Summary.

Author believes that what is healing in psychotherapy is culture applied in psychotherapeutic relations and in psychotherapeutic practice. Man is culture. It is applied in psychotherapy specifically. Several examples illustrate this statement.

Relevant theme is being with others. This phenomenon appears specifically in community group psychotherapy that is pursued by Czech daseinsanalysts. Author introduces this modality and describes it too. In praxes it is not applied only as the therapeutic method but also used in psychotherapeutic training and education of psychologists and social workers and others help professionals.

Key words.

Community group psychotherapy, being with others together

What is therapeutic in psychotherapy, what is healing, is far from just the the techniques or in special procedures with which individual schools of psychotherapy identify themselves, but in the human, personal, social and specialist culture applied in psychotherapeutic relations and in psychotherapeutic practice. By culture I do not mean just the sum of human achievement. Man is culture. The world manifests itself to him and of itself challenges him to understanding, care, action, knowledge, love and wisdom. He becomes culture and transforms the gradually self-revealing world into culture. (see Fink 1996, Aristotle. *Metaphysics* 1946 tr. A.Kříž). In the spring of this year (February 2009) I attended the regular working meeting of the committee of the European Psychotherapeutic Committee in Vienna, and one colleague, a well-known cognitive behavioural psychotherapist, showed me a recording of CBT therapy of a patient suffering from paranoid delusion. What fascinated me was not the method itself, but the painstaking, thorough and consistent way of keeping to the matter that the patient was talking about, without associatively jumping away from a theme or the aspect of it on which the patient was authentically dwelling. It was not a matter of the new idea of reworking cognitive maps, but the culture of psychotherapeutic practice with which he psychotherapist engaged with a patient who had lost his way in his existence. The automatic honour, respect, tact and consideration for the patient. The understanding for the patient,

without distortion or reductionism, informing the whole course of treatment even in the situation into which the patient had got himself. In addition there was a personal psychotherapeutic commitment that was impossible to ignore in every aspect of the treatment. Just as important was the high level of cultivation of special education in the field. If this sample had been presented to me by my colleague Doc. Čálek as a dasein analytical record of his work, I would have been extremely satisfied. I would most probably have commented on it appreciatively as a successful piece of work, typical and beneficial for students, and not only at our higher school.

In April of this year I saw the documentary film, *The Roma King*. Without embarking on an analysis of what is certainly an unusually effective longitudinal documentary, I shall only say here that one cannot but be struck by the message that the "Romany problem" (lack of education, crime, broken families, life in ghettos) is like the problem of every other "minority" - in being a matter of our own culture as well. This is because we, our local culture, not only feel helpless confronted by the "Romany Question", but are actually part of the question - we create Romany difficulties. When some members of the Romany community gained real and unconditional acceptance from a certain part of society (some emigrated to Great Britain where they were accepted without prejudice, and others moved to Moravia, where they were taken in by the Christian Church), and also received a simple admission of blame and request for forgiveness for the wrongs committed by us "whites", - it was precisely in that moment that the conditions of change were constituted. Including changes in the official area of health and sickness. As the documentary showed, the open culture of the society that the Roma joined did them a great deal of good. They received civic acceptance and human honour and respect, and only on this basis could the offer of the much-needed education, accommodation and jobs follow.

The best-known and indeed one of the few world famous Czech doctors, the alcohol specialist doc. MUDr. J. Skála based his treatment on the therapeutic community. He realised that alcohol-dependent people had experienced a collapse of relationships, values and responsibility for their lives. The structure of their lives had disintegrated, causing a tragic alienation from the culture in which they had lived to that moment. Skála based his therapeutic system on the renewal of the culture of everyday life and gradual new return to individual areas of society.

It is now more than twenty years since one colleague of mine, who was personally involved in political dissent and whose opinion I always valued, told me, "Thanks to your individual training, you analysts have ceased to be sufficiently socially sensitive. I don't know

a single one in whom this lack is not observable." The comment helped me to a personal and professional turning-point. All the examples I have given will later help us to a better understanding of the importance of shared *dasein*, being together, for community and group psychotherapy. One of the inescapable characteristics of being with the world is being-with-others. M. Boss (1974) writes that the "the ontological character of being-together announces itself in the way we together sustain the openness and luminence of our world and their preservation" (Boss, 1985, p. 89.) This general characterisation has its concrete existential forms, which apply in the existential activities of love, work and struggle. (Fink., Rezek 1996).

These existential activities are to be understood not just as the life functions of the individual existence, but are always also realised in the field of shared being. Because this is meaningful precisely when the others assert themselves in it in a corresponding way. For without the participation of the others, love, work and struggle, like a range of other existential functions would be only abstract or extremely impoverished realities of being in the natural world. (Patočka) The dimension of shared being (co-existence) as action realised with body and mind together with others, and the shared experience that pertains to it, is a crucial and indispensable determinant (determining factor) for these existential acts. We never live in any other way than in a constant state of relationality to others, and in our relatedness we are open to other people such that we together mutually enter into each other's experience of being. The human "I" is not a substance, nor is it a collection of functions or abstract structure as the ego is conceived in psychology. It is the human personal coming standing-out in a world that is also common for the others, in which we dwell together with the others and not merely side by side. This common dwelling in relation to a matter of shared interest, determination and meaning opens up for man the way for being in human communities. Co-operation, comradeship, love or help and sympathetic care is characteristic for this common being-in-the-world. But its opposite form is also part of common being: non-co-operation, individualism and hatred and indifference. In any case, good and bad human attributes are social in character.

Relationality to others is evident in the act of confirmation by the others. Christ on the cross before his death cries "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachtani?" (My God, My God, Why has thou forsaken me?) (Mark 15,23-42 NT). In the Gospel according to St. Luke (L 23,28-48, NT) we hear him just before his death saying: "Father, into Thy Hands I commit my spirit". Dependence is one of the basic characteristics of common-being. We live in no other way than in continual relationality to others, and in our openness we are pervaded by others.

Relationality is the original ground of individuation and part of relations. It is the attribute of common beings. If relationality becomes unfree, then it becomes slavery or changes into its pathological form of dependence. Extreme individualism and heroic independence are intelligible only in the context of being-together, because they are derived from it. On the other hand stands extreme subjection to others, as illustrated by the fates of members of sects, or crowd behaviour. The natural life environment of man (it is more accurate to speak of existential conditions, because life environment is generally used to mean nature without people), is culture, in which man lives. Its influence is as great as that of genetic make-up, good nutrition and an unpolluted environment, or conversely bacterial or viral epidemics or other agents of rapid and radical physiological change. We have seen this in a positive light using the example of Roma, but the last century provides vivid examples of cultural upheaval with far-ranging negative effects. We can only explain the change in the ideas and behaviour of the Germans, or of Czechs under normalisation (the repressive period 1969-1989) by grasping the effects of the total disruption of the basic structures of the culture and their supports, - a disruption that deprived society of its power and delivered it into the hands of a bully who then easily seized control of it. The peoples concerned lacked the means for effectively defending themselves from the devastating effect of these influences. As soon as such defences fail, only exceptional people manage to resist for any long period. Most analyses and critiques of human behaviour have been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of the failure of either whole nations and individuals, Neither psychology, sociology nor political science, nor even philosophy have fully appreciated cultural influences and provided a persuasive account of them. (In this sense we should be particularly critical of evolutionary Darwinism as applied to man and human society, since with its acultural concept of evolution it halts before the gates of the development of the human species. Theories that are extremely acultural, i.e. also ahistorical, disrespect, denigrate or ignore the values and cultural treasures of Western civilisation).

Our identity is confirmed by the durability of the relations that stabilise it and at the same time open it up anew to social situations. This is what makes us socially perceptive, open and adequately engaged.

Openness is possible thanks to the identity of the human being and his involvement in relationships. Maintaining openness in being-together requires yet another set of activities - the return of being to the self. This movement arises from shared dwelling in the natural world (Patočka 1996-2002). The return to the self is no mere "narcissistic" movement from self to self, but happens in common being. With people who are immediately participating in

dasein, who are its "flesh and blood". The human being is never without others, not even in the case of abandonment, which is in any case a proof of presence in absence.

It has only been in community group psychotherapy that we have fully grasped that the so-called archetypes do not play out individually in the head of each person, nor are they universally inborn structures of the spirit, but that they are parts of being-together, social-cultural situations in which the individual together with other people in the natural world finds himself in certain important circumstances. (Patočka 2002, Čálek 2005, Růžička 2008). The natural "life environment" of man is culture in the same way that it is the virgin forest or steppe for animals - environments which in any case become culture the moment when man enters them. He names them and begins to investigate them and change them into possibilities that could not develop of themselves. Only man can by his labours free the statue hidden in the stone. Only man can wrest a law from apples falling to the ground.

The so-called archetype of the hero appeared in community space following some extreme threat to community existence, when one of its members had appeared as a person called to save the community. He was then entrusted by the same community with the task and sent to the rescue. And on his return glorified as a hero. (Sports stadiums are places where the old hero myths are recalled and renewed in games and sports contests, heroes are awaited and then the crowds and wider public honour them appropriately). Without human community, the archetype of the hero could have none of the meaning with which and in which it appeared and could be fulfilled by the genuine engagement of the person concerned.

As an example I can give an account of an occasion when the phenomenon of death emerged in training community one Easter. It was a time when by coincidence Belgrade was being bombed. At the morning meeting of the community, which usually took place in a cheerful and sprightly mood, there was an oppressively tense atmosphere. It turned out that all the participants were pervaded by themes of destruction, waste and dying. During the day, the community's engagement with the imagery death, destruction and evil was joined by a new manifestation, the "archetype of the child". Spontaneous and unexpected memories of childhood experiences and childhood literary and film heroes opened up entirely new thematic horizons that eventually showed their connections with the preceding themes. Songs followed and the shared lunch became a feast ending in the joyful relief of carrying out an improvised figure of death beyond the borders of the training community. Then there were conversations about Easter and old folk customs. No one present had ever before had a chance to practice the pagan custom of the banishment of death and joyful welcoming of spring, and at best they were just superficially acquainted with the idea as a piece of long past tradition. In

the circumstances, however, it acquired a new, living meaning. The collective depression disappeared with newly opening hopes that suddenly and clearly rose up in mythical form.

The community group modality of Czech dasein analysis takes these and other phenomena into account and introduces them into therapeutic practice.

Note..: There are many differences between patient and training communities in terms of both formation and course, but the principles of their existence are similar. This is why we do not draw a distinction between them in this paper.

The Czech "daseinsanalytical modality" has two successive and mutually connected formations. These are the Community and the Group.

The Psychotherapeutic community.

For any kind of psychotherapeutic group to come into existence and function, a psychotherapeutic community needs to be created that meets for the purpose of psychotherapy. Thus according to our concept, the psychotherapeutic community is called a therapeutic or training Community. In the Czech Republic the psychotherapeutic community has one, two or three psychotherapeutic groups. The community programme includes a series of social and individual activities organised over one or more days, or a week, depending on the therapeutic or training programme. A day on a comprehensive community programme starts with morning activities, which may be social or individual warm-up exercises, spiritual meditation, prayer or contermpation, and then a common breakfast and morning community meeting at which people reflect on the previous day and night, speak about what they have just been doing or feeling, listen to each other and talk together. They communicate their impressions and experiences, and if someone has a birthday or a name day this is also celebrated. They comment on events relating to the community, and tackle organisational and other problems that need to be addressed. The community organisation and meeting are run jointly by therapists with patients or students. Then there is group therapy usually 2 -3 times daily. The programme is usually complemented by various forms of relaxation, such as an art therapy workshop, musical therapy, exercises/practice on particular skills and so on. In the middle of the day there is a communal lunch, after which people have two to three hours free, followed by another group. Supper is usually communal. Then there is evening entertainment or an educational or cultural programme and then more free time in which people can get together, this time in small groups but occasionally all together in a free programme, often away from the building whether the therapy takes place. We call this the community background.

The Psychotherapeutic Group.

The Daseinanalysis (DA) group is a community always characterised authentic relations and also always by original relations, among which what are known as transference or model and goal-orientated relations are considered to be deforming constructs. The DA Group regards even transference relations as entirely original, but as relations that have been occluded over the long term or prejudicially burdened from the very beginning.

The regression associated with these relations, i.e. the lapse into those original and as it were displaced and so unconscious childish relations, is interpreted in DA in a non-reductive way. This is because it is evident that in these contexts so-called adult and mature relations were never truly achieved and that the person concerned has learned them as an actor learns roles, and so these are not authentic relations. It is therefore no wonder that in real life, in which a role can be played only temporarily and adulthood can be pretended only up to the first test of adulthood, such relations turn out to be lifeless and ersatz, while the original and immature relations are inadequate to situations that require adult, authentically free and responsible action and behaviour. In the group it is observable that such relations or behaviour appear at the first opportunity, especially in reminiscences but also in situations in which in terms of ability to cope in life an individual turns out to as be like the naked emperor in Anderson's fairytale or else to have only a limited and inadequate response under certain particularly unfavourable circumstances, i.e. he has not achieved a real capacity to deal with them. The DA group is led with honour, respect, desire for understanding and tolerance towards other people. The mutual relationality of the people involved is manifest in sympathy, solidarity, willingness to listen, share and help, and also in other, original and natural human relations and feelings. DA distances itself from reductive schools of thought that consider aggression and rough sexuality without love as a "biologically original" inherited model of behaviour. Instead it understands human nature as culturally conditioned. At the same time we do not believe that what is known as the abreaction (release) of aggression and its expressions is essential, because we do not share the unjustified and oversimplified view that only a person with repressed emotions acts unaggressively and that it is "healthy" to abreact and discharge aggression. DA considers the universal abstract concept of aggression to be an artificial construct that elides and ignores the very different reasons and circumstances of so-called "biologically" determined behaviour. The starting point for consideration of aggression is not its biological purpose, but the polarity of good and evil, from which people's behaviour can then be understood, judged and also appositely defined. So-called instinctual or inherited aggression without concrete context always needs to be further excavated with a view to non-reductionist understanding.

A sense of atmosphere, relational conditions and good will, and a deeper understanding. is cultivated in DA psychotherapists through peculiar and wider cultural and anthropological education not usually required elsewhere. This is a new soil enabling members of the group to grow and get rid of earlier warped beliefs, relations, views and expectations. Equally important is the newly forming awareness of the natural rights and liberties of the human being. These have always been given, but require awareness if the human being is to make them his own.

Group psychotherapy enables people to participate in the stories of others. They can compare and judge their own words and behaviour with those of the other members, and can be inspired by and learn from them. Above all, however, the people involved become close and many group comradeships grow into long-term friendships. Also significant is the expression and authentic experience of emotion. Emotions are not of course pure abstract feelings as current psychology presents them. As the Stoics and Plato knew they have their cognitive side. Emotions are an expression of knowledge that has not been uttered nor even designated by speech. Wonder, for example includes the sight of the unexpected, fear the perception of danger, satisfaction the assurance of security. Yet feelings can be extracted from the stream of private experience and adapted, through speech, for repetition and in order to make them public as a resource for semantic understanding. This is the reason for the great emphasis is placed on speech in DA (see Čálek, 2009 and also Heidegger, 1986 Gadaamer, 1965). In the group, the emotions of others bring not just a mere emotional abreaction, but in view of the fullness of meanings of the life situations of group members they are insights into the fullness of meanings of life situations of group members. Experiences and their free expression are an inspiration and challenge to the similar free and full expression of life that is lacking in the mentally ill.

Group communication is the most important method of group therapy. This is because it is by narration and discussion and free debate and the expression of feelings, memories, plans and complaints that a person draws others into his own life and so allows them a living involvement in his life. Narration is the opening up of private life space to others, the presentation of how, and by what the narrator lives. People are shown new realities, while the narrator has the benefit of new and often unexpected reactions, usually positive and sympathetic for him, stimulating and encouraging communications, ideas and subjects. Moments of authentic understanding and revealing discoveries are major group events. Narrative is also a challenge to participation in often difficult and distressing life events. Also an expression of hope orientated towards others - hope that the desired changes will take place

in their lives. At the same time it is a test of the possibility of acceptance by other people, in a space of kind good will and caring interest. These therapeutic conditions might seem non-functional to a technocrat. In fact it turns out that they are crucial.

Relationality is part of dasein. Relations in the group are not some spiritless repetition of old schemata of behaviour, but even if stereotypical they are always original. This is why they are taken just as seriously as when new discoveries are made and important changes take place. In the group environment, people find the courage for those relational possibilities for which they were earlier too inhibited or had not yet developed to the point where they could embrace them. The development of relational possibilities is not left just to the group, however, but thanks to experience of free relational connection within the group, new horizons open up elsewhere in life. The situation is the same in regard to the therapist. He is usually seen as a person of special authority, which from the nature of his status and work for the others he indeed is. Not even in his case, however, are we talking of "transference relations", but of original relational forms, even if these are influenced by the past in proportion to the therapist's knowledge of patients' illnesses and so are not unconstrained. As time goes by the relationship to the therapist changes too, but even if the patient recovers and his relationship to the therapist ceases to be conditioned the therapeutic relation, meetings with him remain important life experience. This is not surprising when the therapist has not only helped the patient but also been a participant and witness of their most intimate and important communications and meetings. His interpretative contributions are not in any way schematic, nor is he the translator of the manifest into the language of abstract theories, but his specialist education (among other things) means that he is broadly sensitive to the original meanings and connections of the patient's life and so facilitates understanding of the unreduced matter of meaning that emerges in therapy.

Dasein/Experience of being in the group opens up for its participants many opportunities that do not usually appear elsewhere. The behaviour of the people in the group is not passively reactive, but always corresponds in a lively way to the events in the group; members themselves initiate and open new themes and possibilities of how to live them, and point out the meanings of what is emerging and find their connections with possible contexts. The group is a place where a person can set out on the unknown territory of his threatened existence, because he is surrounded by people who have become his intimate acquaintances and provide a reliable background. Basically this reduces the isolation that people otherwise feel as a consequence of their exclusion. This leads to solidarity and considerations that are based on the patients own experience of illness. The therapeutic successes of some inspire

others to follow and encourage faith and hope of recovery in everyone. The shared successes and happiness derived from them have a beneficial effect on the whole therapeutic process and all the people in the group. The successful steps are not, however, a matter of mechanical imitation. On the contrary, they stimulate people to a deeper understanding of the situation from which such behaviour follows. Others may serve as a warning.

Themes common to everyone often appear in the group. Thorough and concentrated group discussions about these common themes usually bring great gains in understanding and lead to the discovery of new possibilities for their existential fulfilment. On such occasions, we time and again find people having a powerful and intense experience of a shared and jointly lived moment for the first time in their lives.

Encouragement, appreciation and group support are among the most important human expressions in the group. The non-ego-centred sense of being together, "we-ness" is a special and distinctive social phenomenon. It is a harmonised encounter over the same matter, a common openness to the realities that in their urgency address everyone together and in their meaning go beyond the individual possibilities of being. It must be said that these appear not only in the psychotherapeutic group, but quite regularly in the therapeutic community as well. The psychotherapeutic community is the field of therapeutic being-together where the practical everyday life of the group is realised. The meeting of members of the therapeutic group is not focussed exclusively on psychotherapy, but has its extra-group programme in which people can authentically, genuinely express themselves in everyday experience. If in the group old relations are uncovered and new relations are born, in the community people transform them into their living and real form. They use them to create a culture of being-together; a culture of relations, action, communication, is consolidated and strengthened by the trust and security prevailing between friends and people close to each other in small ad hoc groups. We call such meetings the "community background. The knowledge and new possibilities discovered in the psychotherapeutic group are in this way embodied in everyday life and consolidated in the values of community culture. The gains and the still unexploited reserves of therapy emerge in the community in an immediate way. The community is not a mere mirror of the preceding group meeting, but a vital commentator, a sympathetic glosser and accompanying echo. Here it is possible to complete conversations, talk discussion through, make explicit or repeat and also - in humour, joking, caricaturing or other "lightening up" entertainment to free oneself and get a distance on the preceding group events. Every community has its own distinctive face, order, customs and character. It also has its unique creative and therapeutic effect, its own original culture. In this sense group work, group

therapy is an integral part of the psychotherapeutic community. The therapeutic community offers an opportunity for the application and development of social gifts of various kinds; it creates a chance for self-realisation, self-presentation and also provides entertainment and spectacle. It allows people to experience themselves, in a carefree and safe way, in different social situations and also to let themselves be carried and led by the current of social events and without the risk of ridicule or denigration or inappropriate exhortations or criticism to try out the social roles in which they do not know how to cope, or which are new and unfamiliar to them. They can repeat them and test them out and discover them in different forms and situations. The community and the group are places where people not only discover new possibilities, but where meaningful individual and social values are mapped out and defined. Community experience creates a chance for people to experience in full strength the meaning of being-together, it is an opportunity to identify the common lot of humanity. Through the purity of relations and the reinforcing awareness of one's own individual and social values, the community environment becomes for its participants the starting point for their further pilgrimage in life, one of the new horizons of home.

In order that human community should exist in a meaningful way, it is essential that it should live by faith in the truth that it avows and that it serves, the aims that spring from it and to which it aspires, and the fixed order that has its roots in traditions and horizons transcending sectional interests (see e.g. Halík, *Addressing Zacheus.*, Praha 2006., *Lidové noviny*). It is characteristic of psychotherapeutic communities that are not reduced to self-serving societies and are open to what speaks immediately to them, that apart from the psychotherapeutic they open up themes that reach beyond themselves. The concrete operational and organisational rules and therapeutic recommendations in DA community psychotherapy are derived from the guidelines set out above. In the same way the course and non-medical results of DA treatment and the way that it is conducted are related to them and interpreted in their terms.

In this paper we have presented the psychotherapeutic community in its two formations. Community and group. Community actually has two meanings: the community of people in therapy, part of which is the psychotherapeutic group and its operation, and the organised meeting of people in treatment, or during psychotherapeutic training.

At our higher school we have drawn up and introduced a five-year community group self-experience programme which cultivates human relations and enables students in a training group to experience self-understanding and the understanding of other people and to bring this to life in the community. The programme has a developmental, character-forming and

culturally creative influence and we consider it a useful and promisingly evolving component of education as part of university-level studies.