

New Contributions on the Emotional Communication and Interpersonal Interaction within Groups:

Abstract:

This paper will lean over some of the newest conceptual contributions about the understanding of the Emotional Communication and the Interpersonal Interaction within the Group settings through recent integrations of scientific data supported by different investigation's areas, such as, Child Development Psychology, the Attachment, the Emotional Self-Regulation and the Mentalization processes, as possible contributions for a new neuro-dynamic perspective for the Group-Analytical Theory

Key-Words:

Attachment, Emotions, Emotional Communication, Group-Analysis, Interpersonal Inter-Action

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The author would liked to remind that the group-analysis's founder, S.H. Foulkes considered that the technique of doing psychological analyses in group, it would go through exercising effects on the participants within what Foulkes had originally designated as "*the training of the ego in action*" (Foulkes, 1957) and also that it was necessary to happen "*emotional correctives experiences*" in the perspective from F. Alexander & T. French (1949), which conceptualization have been reformulated by Dennis Brown, as "*the development of Self through the subjective interaction*" (Brown, 1994).

Otherwise in 1964, S.H. Foulkes formulated already the **power of the group**, in the following terms: "... derives from the assumptions that we implicitly make, that it is the not secondary and basic character from the man's social nature, the existence of a constant flow of a communication, verbal and non-verbal, conscious and non-conscious, indeed from a communion or sharing of experiences" (Foulkes, 1964, p.125). For him, the psychotherapeutic groups possessed intrinsic and "natural" powers, whose forces would emerge by one side from the groups' deep social and sociological nature and by the other side

from the intense interaction's situations that would make the human mind susceptible of significant expansions of self-conscience and psychic self-knowledge.

In this paper, the author will lean over the question about the nature of the intrinsic and "natural" group's powers, regarding the spring of new neuroscientific data and recent theoretical integrations (Schoore, 1994, 2003; Siegel, 1999), emerging from countless lines of scientific investigation in several areas of the knowledge, namely, from the emotionality and its self-regulation, the emphatic phenomena, the developmental psychology or the **Attachment's operative models** and the **Mentalization processes**, which the author considers to have the most significant impacts over new acknowledges about how such intrinsic and spontaneous forces perform in the groups therapeutics' situations.

The group-analysts, who reflects over "*...all the processes, conscious and unconscious, intentional and non-intentional, apprehended and non-apprehended that operates among the people within a group*" (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957, p.244) and we are witnesses of the most varied dynamics of unconscious (implicit) and conscious (explicit) communications, facilitated by the intimacy conditions, the secrecy and the openness of group-analytic sessions, allowing the emergence line forces which some root in their own group processes and other in lines forces, who are derived from the infantile precocious relationships, since the group members are impelled unavoidably to be in communication amongst themselves and to induce among them all, included the group-analyst, the most diverse mental states accompanied by affective and emotional components and which are illustrated by a variety of non-verbal signs, supported by more or less spontaneous verbalizations.

While being an analyst in group-situation, the author has noticed for countless occasions that his group members related frequently their "expansions" of acknowledge about the causes and the contributive factors for their problems and antagonisms with certain moments of communication, that had occurred amongst themselves, as well as, with the impacts of certain and determined Interventions / Interpretations from the group-analyst.

The author has perceived that these "expansions" of the self-knowledge flow essentially from mental elaborations over certain psychic states, thoughts or ideas, which are a lot of times influenced not so by what it was transmitted to them explicitly, but by something that they will have to share at non-conscious communication levels through postures, attitudes, glances, smiles or even grimaces on the faces, that activates them phenomena promoting the increasing of self-conscience, introspection, self-reflection capacity (reflexive) and even of meta-cognition which supported the capacity and the exercise of some mental functions and neuro-psychic mechanisms, such as the empathy,

the psychological insight or the mental introspection, all so important for the approaches on their own Selves in more truth and creatively modes.

For such authors as, Jaak Panksepp (1998), Allan N. Schore (1994, 2003), Daniel J. Siegel (1999) or Viviane Green (2003), all these **non-conscious communication phenomena** occur in the interface between the neuro-physiologic processes and the inter-personal interaction's dynamics, whose experiences are the most influential to the pro-social nature of our brain, considering that the responsible circuits for the social perception are the same ones or they are deeply connected with those that integrate the important functions for control and creation of meanings, the regulation of the corporal states, the modulation of the emotions, the organization of the memories and even of the Communication's capacities.

In several studies over the **interpersonal interactions** in situations of physical proximity or "*how a mind manages to influence another mind*", they concluded that it is through different modalities of energy and information's transfers, where the physical proximity among individuals has certain direct effects, model directly the electrical activity electrical in each brain, in separate (McCraty et. al., 1998) or that they are linked to "*hidden regulators*" connected to the tactile stimulation, to the human warmth, to the touch (Hoffer, 1994) and which are extremely important in the parents-children's relationships (Sapolsky, 1997). In another studies over higher physical distances, it reveals the existence of influences in the activity and development of the brain through verbal pathways, as non-verbal ones, from the behaviors' responses, which they would work, as much as specific signs, as non-specific signs. For instance, the words and the non-verbal prosodic components of the speech, they contain information that creates representational processes inside of the receiver's mind and other non-verbal signs as, the voice tone, the gestures, the own time of response, they have a direct impact in the socially sensitive validation brain's centers. The expression of these emotional elements of the social signs, it is used to activate the same circuits that they mediate the emotional responses in the receiver, the orientation of the attention, the appreciation of the meanings and the development of the excitement.

Therefore the **interpersonal experience** is one of the significant forces in the modeling of the brain's structure and functions and which the **interpersonal relationships** can facilitate or inhibit this tendency in an integrated in coherent and spontaneous changes of communication while the **emotional communication** and **relationship patterns** are those that they affect directly the brain's development, as much in the mammals, as in the humans. The researches in the area of the affective neuro-sciences suggest that the emotionality is useful as a central organizing process of the brain.

It's supposed that this emotional communication is one of the primary modes through which the Attachment's experiences and other precocious

relational dynamics models the structures which creates the mental representations and allows a coherent vision of the World or said in another mode, they are the **interpersonal experiences**, the ones who influence directly the mode how we construct mentally, "our World and our Life's Vision".

In an extended revision on the neurobiology of the emotional development, accomplished and published by Allan N. Schore (1994, 2003), he states that at birth, we all aren't able to self-regulate our body and our mental states, being this regulation, initially accomplished, essentially through a designated "*emotional communication*" through the *phenomena of the alignment of mental states* and to their reply to the parental patterns through the *internalization* within the neuronal system of a child, that will be modulated by the mature brain of the parental figure or the significant caretaker.

This **emotional communication** is dependent on the communication sequences that they should be spontaneous meaning the occurrence of moments from emotional attunement or alignment of the mental states, that are alternated with other attunement or non-alignment moments between the caretaker and the child, where it can be manifest prohibitions and interdictions which they also take side at the acquisition of a healthy capacity for the self regulation of the mental states.

The cerebral cortex that plays a major role on the affective regulation is the **orbit-frontal cortex**, a brain area placed just behind the eyes and located in a strategic point in the top of the limbic emotional system, close to the associative cortex, which is responsible for the thinking configurations and conscience levels. The **orbit-frontal cortex** plays a crucial role in the affective regulation and it is particularly sensitive to "face to face" communication and to the visual contact and it is through the affective attunement that it settles in the interaction among child-caretaker, who reflects the changes in the internal emotional states and what is attuned are the psycho-biological states of the participants in these interacting pairs (Schore, 1994)

On his behalf, Daniel J. Siegel (1999) refers to this **alignment of the mental states** as being, or a univocal process in which the individual's states change themselves to be compatible and to anticipate to the other person's ones or a bilateral process involving the movements from each dyad member. Such alignments should happen frequently, but not always necessarily. The affective attunement, also requests moments of non-alignment, it means that when is not trying to do the coincidence or anticipation of the each one participant's mental states.

These processes are wrapped up in another and more widely process, designated of **emotional resonance**, which it continues after the alignment of the mental states to have stopped. This fundamental system of cerebral evaluation help the brain to organize its self-functioning, being the emotion's regulation, the essence of this self-organization, one of the fundamental

pathways through which the complex mental systems works and the possible consequences of each mental activity are self organized in mental states, which they should generate a cohesive set of processes that are guided by objectives. This self-regulation is linked to nuclear aspects of the Self, whose factors most important are the amplification of the shared positive affective states and the reduction of the negative affective states (Schore, 1994; Siegel, 1999).

The Role of the Attachment within the Interpersonal Communication

Parallel to the emotional communication's phenomena, we know about the existence of a pre-programmed system which involves cerebral pathways that influences and organizes the motivational and emotional processes of the memoirs in relation to the significant caretakers, and it was designated by **Attachment**, whose processes were investigated initially by John Bowlby (1969). In a recent definition, Peter Fonagy referred to these **Attachment processes**, as the ones that "*assure the cerebral processes who serve the social cognition, they are adequately organized and prepared to equip the individual for a cooperative existence and for the cooperation with the Other to which the Brain was conceived*" (Fonagy, 2003, p.55).

In fact, it exists a recent consensus over the selective advantages of **Attachment**, since we are one of the mammal species more deeply vulnerable and with a quite slow and complex maturation process because the human baby needs to be biologically prepared, since the moment of his birth, to seek protection coming from their co-specific ones or older members of the same species. These ones, whereas **Attachment figures**, they will be disposed to provide basic cares beyond the physical ones. Besides, the scientific studies on **Attachment**, they have revealing that the organization patterns of Attachment relationships during the childhood are associated "*with specific processes of emotional regulation, of social relationship, of access to the autobiographical memory and to the development of a self-reflection and to the narrative*" (Main, 1995).

Although the **Attachment's behaviors** are observed, primarily, in the children; adults continue to manifest Attachment traits through all their personal life (Parkes et. al., 1991), because they select certain "*Attachment figures*" when they are confronted with emotionally strong life circumstances, especially, the negative moments in order to find, comfort, advice and emotional support. These people or "*Attachment figures*" can be either companions, lovers, close friends, or even counselors or mentors, or even through a professional help, by a psychotherapist in individual or group situation.

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So the **Attachment** can be understood in its nuclear aspects as a spontaneous communication characterized by a total and compromised exchange of signs among the members of a dyad and based on a responsive and sensitive mode from the parents to their children, allowing a collaborative and spontaneous communication between both.

Now a days, the essence of **Attachment** is considered based on "*the alignment of internal experiences or mental states and in a mutual partition of interactions combinations in which the child and the caretaker are mutually influenced*", for this Daniel J. Siegel (1999) designates as **emotional attunement** or **resonant mental states**, that they are supported by a "*transforming attuned relationship that should involve the following fundamental elements: the spontaneity; the collaborate communication; the attuned psychobiological states; the mutually shared interactions that involve the amplification of the positive affective states and the reduction of the negatives ones; the reflection on the mental states and the further development of safety mental models that qualify or make possible the emotional modulation and the positive expectations for the future interactions*" (Siegel, 1999, p.118).

Therefore always it appears in an **insecure Attachment**, a non-spontaneous communication's patterns, which can be untidy or inconsistent or intrusive or even a disorientated source for the mental disorganization or even for the terror in children's mental states and these two last ones, they are derived of from a clearly **disorganized/disoriented Attachment**, within the adults, they will be during their own childhoods, object of emotional rejections and negligence, we found relationships' styles with their children marked by Attachment from the avoidance type which communication it seems to have little sensitivity to the signs and the emotional attunement and their personal narratives reflects a certain isolation and distance in the interpersonal intimacy, in relation to their bodies and to their infantile background.

The adults who probably experienced from infantile cares in an inconsistent mode and from communications of an intrusive type, they tend to promote a **Attachment** full of anxiety, uncertainty and ambivalence, revealing it an **anxious/ambivalent Attachment** and the children from these adults experience their concerned mental states which prevent them to perceive frequently their children's needs in a consistent mode. The narratives from these adults, they are marked by the intrusions of certain past mental states which they disturb their capacities to reveal a spontaneous communication with their own children.

Finally, it is infer that in these adults aren't capable to help their children on trauma's resolutions and with their losses. This is the most significant hint associated with the most disturbed form of infantile Attachment, the **disorganized/disoriented Attachment** involving their children in a larger risk for developing psychiatric disturbances.

So an **insecure Attachment** can serve as a significant risk factor for the development of psychopathology (Jones et Al., 1996), while a **safe Attachment** seems to grant a form of emotional resilience (Rutter, 1987, 1997).

Therefore the interactions which are sensitive to the communication signs, with prevalence of spontaneous communications and reflexive dialogue, they are those interactions that they promote more an emotionally attuned interpersonal communication and who will facilitate the self-organization of the Self, the development of an internal coherence sense and the increase of the Mentalization capacities, the fundamental bases for each one's Mental Health (Siegel, 1999).

The Importance of Mentalization within the Emotional Communication and the Interpersonal Interaction

An evolutionary and developmental aspect from the **Attachment's processes** that has been object of recent investigations, it is the increase of the Mentalization capacities, whose concept is linked to investigation lines accomplished by investigators, such as, Peter Fonagy, Mary Target, Gyorgy Gergely, Anthony Bateman, Jeremy Holmes, Glen O. Gabbard, etc., which they defined and work out a so called Interpretative and interpersonal Function (F.I.I.), which it is not nor the concept of "internal working model" from J. Bowlby (1969), nor the concept "To Be as If" from D. Stern (1998). In this Interpretative interpersonal Function (F.I.I.), they separate the processes guided cognitively (FII-C) from the group of processes guided by the emotions or by the affects (FII-A). In this last one conjunct, they included the notion of **mentalized affectivity**, a mental process that refers to the simultaneous experiential and knowledge of a sensation and also to these authors "*the affect's regulation or the capacity to modulate emotional states, it is intimately related with Mentalization or Reflexive Function, which plays a fundamental role in the emerging of a Sense of Self and a Self's Representation. In this perspective, the affect's regulation is a sign for the Mentalization*" (Fonagy, 2006, p.70).

For Peter Fonagy and Mary Target exist four mechanisms for the emotional control and processing, which contribute to the unfolding along the development of the interpretative function, being them: the recognition and the affect's labeling, the excitement's regulation, the control and the specific capacities of Mentalization (Fonagy & Target, 2002), which are subserved by three separated but interconnected and interacting cerebral nodes that are related to social- detection, the affective regulation and cognitive regulation of the cognitions (Adolphs, 2003), (Nelson et al., 2005).

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The first interacting and interconnected node consists of a hard-wired set of structures that categorizes the stimuli as social and they decipher or detect this social purpose. The areas that make part of this social-detection node include the following cerebral areas: the fusiform face area, the superior temporal sulcus and the anterior temporal cortex (Fonagy, 2006).

The second interacting and interconnected node is concerned with the affect and encompasses regions of the brain engaged by reward and punishment. The generation of affect impregnates the social stimuli with emotional significance and adjusts or regulates the emotional arousal. This system has a significant role in the measurement of the attachment experience and is activated by attachment-related-stimuli. The cerebral areas involved in this node of emotional regulation, they include: the amygdala, hypothalamus, nucleus accumbens, and bed nucleus of the stria terminalis. These brain areas interact with the social-detection node, giving to the social stimuli emotional significance (Fonagy, 2006).

The third node is involved in the cognitive regulation and its key functions include inhibition of pre-potent responses that mediates the goal-direct behavior and the Mentalization. The cerebral areas that make this cognitive-regulation mode include the dorsomedial pre-frontal cortex and the ventral pre-frontal cortex (Fonagy, 2006).

Comments:

Therefore we can state that the **Emotional Communication** and the **Interaction Interpersonal** phenomena are basic ones and they precede all other cognitive or from superior level phenomena and they can promote the Self's reorganization, the development of a internal sense of coherence, as well as, they contribute to the increment of the mentalization capacities and which happen when people are exposed for long periods in a intensive and continuous ways in the intense dual or group interaction situations (David, 2004).

The **Group-Analytical Matrix** is a place and scenery with the necessary and sufficient conditions for such phenomena to occur, therefore the conditions of intimacy, secrecy and openness within a safe atmosphere facilitated by the "face to the face" communication, which allows the uncoiling of the most varied **Emotional Communication** and **Interpersonal Interactions** dynamics, which grows on several levels and revealed by moments of intense exchanges of sensations and experiences among the group members and between them and the group-analyst.

These affective and emotional exchanges will stimulate the experience of certain sensations and thoughts in the group-analyst that places him near to

what it could be the type of experiences from such group member in that precise moment and this non-verbal communication configuration will be experienced by the group member, as if he was understood by the group-analyst through very deep levels of meaning. The group-analyst should be available to develop such private sensitivity for these signs, placing himself, in a certain mental position of double registration, this means, or as sent sensations, emotional and mental states' "receiver" therefore by one of the group members, or by parts from the relational network alternating with their sensations, emotional and mental states' "appraiser" due to his sensitivity to the patients' signs, it will allow him the emergence inside his "Self" of certain "internal answers" in equivalent or complementally mental states, which they will "guide" through the self-consciousness over such "answers", as to elaborate and to begin the expression of his interventions / interpretations.

Therefore to what it has been stated till now, the author judges to be possible to place the following work hypothesis: The "effectively" of the group-analyst interpretative activity depends or not from the moments when he is able to grasp the derived information from the evaluations about his internal and mental states which resultants from the Emotional Communication's impacts, which are generated through Interpersonal Interaction dynamics that happened inside of the Group Matrix? Or in a "more traditional" and group-analytical mode: what are the circumstances in which the Group-analyst's interpretative activity is more appropriate and productive for the Group-Analytical Process? Which are the most pertinent variables inside the interaction between the Pattern and the Group Matrix and vice-versa?

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