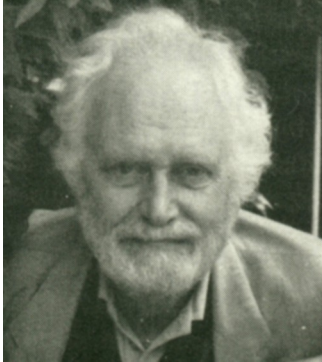


The Millennium and the Median Group

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This is a slightly abridged version of the paper Patrick presented to note the millennium. The word 'kuntic' used at the end of section III signifies the feminine equivalent of 'phallic'. Patrick has coined this word because he feels strongly the need for the feminine to balance the dominant masculine phallic forces of our contemporary cultures.

I. Introduction

The advent of the millennium has stirred people up everywhere as if something really significant is about to happen. Clearly that Christianity is about to survive for a second thousand years is no mean achievement but that does not explain why group analysts who are not specifically Christian have decided to issue a special number about the future of group analysts during the millennium and indeed have gone so far as to plan a special number of Group Analysis devoted to the Median Group.

Now Heulwen Baworowska, Helen Schick and myself, who constitute the backbone of what we have called the Median Group Seminar which meets informally at my home are absolutely delighted since on the whole we feel we have been boycotted by most group analysts intent on promulgating small groups even though they themselves constitute a group of several hundred people. All this seems to be causing some consternation and considerable ambivalence toward our erstwhile activities (to put it mildly).

There is another matter I should like to mention, namely, that in entering the second millennium we have also encountered the potential of becoming dualistic, one thousand having become two; we have had to reflect on our previously linear development and to think more about human affairs in dyadic terms.

II. Process

The mind is a process which reflects the structure, more than a mirror of course, and actively reflects in the thinking sense. This dimension is what I have increasingly learned to recognise as the true spirit of existence (which has the same derivation as the word ecstasy) and which I am sure Descartes experienced when he declared he knew that he existed, in that most celebrated philosophical dictum 'cogito ergo sum'.

For Kant the problem of the duality between noumena and phenomena, between is and ought, was how to find a way of mediating these two worlds. Descartes saw body and mind as split between two "substances" and therefore incompatible. Heidegger considered that philosophy should establish inner independence from the natural sciences; he surely is the therapist's philosopher. The self-evident solution to this dualistic quandary is the practice of the supreme art of dialogue (Plato), a third dimension. Today dialogue is a major feature in therapy. On the whole the dialectic of Hegel (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) is treated as a method or doctrine rather than as an authentic philosophy. Lacan introduced the order of duality for the real and imaginary orders, whilst the symbolic world he characterised as triadic.

I should like to interpolate here the simple dualistic suggestion of Windelbrand to the effect that it is for science to determine facts and for philosophy to determine values. The theme of dualism runs like a red thread throughout metaphysics, and metaphysics could be seen as a form of therapy - the mind's attempt to disclose reality, to negotiate the splits in the ambivalence of conflict, for example the dyads of the sensible and the intelligible, esse versus ens, eidos versus ousia, the actual and the possible, all regarded as mutually independent "substances". Descartes did in fact go so far as to mention "dual interaction", the nearest he got to the term dialogue.

To establish mediation therefore requires a third dimension, namely that of talking, but people often don't believe in talking. I once had the pleasure of addressing a group of 68 bankers from South America at Bretton Woods, the birthplace of the International Monetary Fund. I was given the brief of introducing them to the idea of talking to each other in one session, and arranged for them to sit in a circle. The duality was that of numeracy versus words. They entered a free floating discussion at the end of which the question was asked of What is the point of talking? I countered by asking, "What is the point of breathing? " (In this respect it is interesting to note that the dispensers of aid of one dollar expect a return of thirteen). There seemed to be a conflict between using words as a way of conveying information through talking and of manipulating people through numbers.

In the Upanishads it is written that when unity is realised by the individual he becomes liberated from the sorrow which is the product of dualities. This is forward looking in the sense that such unity can only come through a third 'principle' of dialogue and the resolution of ambivalence. When backward looking the statement refers to linear thinking of which mind is an extension without any change of gear - or perhaps a bi-product or epiphenomenon leading to fragmentation and ruminations of ever smaller circles.

But duality has first to become established, if we are to proceed to praxis. However academically unacceptable, the practice of therapy entails the elegance of a triadic operation. Is this what Wittgenstein meant when he concluded in his later lectures that philosophy is only significant when it is therapeutic in contradistinction to playing games with words; that therapy is the yardstick of philosophy.

III. Content

Content and dialogue are the third dimension when the triple or triad comes into play. Whilst duality is treated by euphemisms such as Russell's "double aspect theory" or "neutral monism", the triad of mediation between the antinomies of duality has met with even greater misgiving; for example, neither the Oxford Companion to Philosophy" nor the 'Companion to The Mind" make any reference to anything triadic, not even the Trinity.

Through dialogue we enter the symbolic world, which the mind can grope and grapple with as distinct from materially physically traumatic experiences of the linear dimension. Painful experiences of the innate mind in the form of memories, push them out of consciousness (knowing with others) back into the body producing the pain of the body e.g. irritable bowel or cystitis, as distinct from the suffering of the mind, a word which derives from "unbearable".

Attachment theory is an interesting case in point for although it refers to the self-evident psychological relation of the actual mother's person in relation to the very personal and specific infant it was felt necessary to be supported as such by biological evidence. Even though attachment theory was conceived of as distinct from sex and feeding, (e.g. after her mother had undergone

ECT, a daughter commented “This is not my mother, she is a different person” relating to the psychological meaning of her actual mother) and is what I would describe as psychic, psychological, not biological, and not needing biological sanction.

Feeding and sex are physiological functions whilst Eros is of the mind. Sex, being procreative cannot afford to be promiscuous. Creativity on the contrary has to be cultivated, since it is cultural and promotes inspiration and counteracts the suffering of depression. Sexual perversion is a pseudo-solution. Freud considered perversion to be at the core of all neurosis, (it can indeed act as an anti-depressant) and that all psychopathology has an infantile sexual component. The puritan ethic throws out the baby with the bathwater, and puritanism is cultural. Speculation, creativity, mind (as distinct from mindlessness) is not regarded as culturally respectable, depression is a respectable disease, sexual perversion is not. The linear course of the 'natural' sciences, statistics, measurability, predictability, quantum theory, cause effect, cognitive science, behaviourism, baroque music, rockets to Mars, phallocentricity, pollution, cancer are all culturally "respectable". The laughable theory of the black hole and the big bang are respectable, the primal scene isn't (except in psychoanalytic circles). By the same token, new developments such as the median group are treated with considerable circumspection. The mind cannot be a linear extension of the brain since it occurs between brains and is therefore a binary phenomenon.

In the world of music, there is similar evidence of respectability, of good pure baroque music versus bad romantic; in pop, angry beat is distinct from the unacceptable tuneful. People cling to the status quo however dubious, e.g. ethnic 'cleansing'. To address respectable massification (the duality of leader & lead) occurring along dual lines, the development of counter cultural or microculture is crucial, which is through dialogue.

After 60 years of applying dialogue as therapy the significance of mind has become ever increasingly and strikingly more clear to me. The word mind is derived from the Norse word myndig or vote. And the meaning of the word sin (from the Aramaic, the language Christ spoke) meant failing to focus the mind. If dialogue is the Supreme Art (Plato) then the exercising of the mind itself is primary, added to this the mind as erotic (as opposed to sexual) must above all be cultivated if health is to be promoted, and therefore is essential to therapy. Interpreting transference simply unblocks dialogue.

The members of the seminar who inspired me to write contributors to this article run a weekly Median Group Seminar which as we said is termed median since it bridge's the dichotomy which universally prevails between small and large groups, between tribal and social, and results in such dilemmas as the incongruous discrepancy between poverty in the midst of plenty, the destruction of nature's wealth by pollution and banking, and a relentless march by phallocratic forces, totally obdurate to widespread and Kuntic protestations. Without this duality, dialogue cannot proceed. Another significant duality is that of the Old and New Testament. The Old is family and tribal orientated whilst the New recommends giving up family ties in suggesting we love our neighbours.

IV. Metastructure or Microculture

To-date we have, as a species lost the ability to apply any remotely effective technique, any modus operandi, with which to address cultural issues in the sense that culture implies group mind. We seem to have lost a collective sense of sanity; perhaps we are focussing for the first time.

The Median Group we suggest offers a simple method of learning to talk to each other comprehensively, and attempts to humanise society, and to transform frustration and outrage into the energy required to think, not only mechanically and digitally but analogically, not only in numbers but with words, in the same way that the Word humanises the divine.

We are attempting to reclaim the ancient method practised over 60,000 years ago by the hunter gatherers who paved the way to free floating discussion in groups (up to 30 people) to evolve a microculture of its own, and small enough for all to have participated within a reasonable time e.g. 1 1/2 hours.

This does not in any way denote that the larger group (the median group) supersedes the one-to-one or small group situations but simply adds a so far unexplored area of social context, within which these disciplines operate, and which could prepare us for the massified complexities of the politico-social arena in a direct, simple and operational way, namely by learning to talk to each other on the level, therefore to think, 'consciousness raising'. We cannot only 'feel' our way out of the atom bomb.

The Median Group approaches psychology from the opposite direction to insights of the individual and family inner world, namely from a position of oversight, looking at the socio-political context; this denotes a radical and revolutionary change in direction. But there are constant delays to its acceptance but it is time we stopped infantilising and trivialising. We wish to promote thinking as distinct from treating thought as an intellectual defence against expressing aggression in a world about to blow itself up!

In applying the Median Group, we are practising an appropriate if challenging technique which provides the missing link between small and large groups. As already mentioned in Aramaic, the language Christ spoke, the word 'sin' meant loss of focus. To this day in archery it is still a term for missing the target.

Having established psycho and group therapy, it remains for us to apply socio-therapy not simply as an academic theory but as a tool, as an operational technique to save the world. Why be ashamed of good intentions? Why collapse in the face of derision? Paradoxically dialogue extricates the centre of Self from massification by a circumference of contextual conformity where chains of cliches pass as thinking. We do this by meeting together with people similarly disposed, as distinct from being obsessed by the mechanical mouthing of numbers. We choose words to barter with, talking with each other rather than studying linguistic philosophy eventually exploring the creative centre of the universe as well as the social context. We seek, in addressing both centres of self and, of the cosmos to focus on principle of meaning, adding a third principle to Freud's two principles, Pleasure & Reality.

V. Totalisation

Totalisation is as important as reductive analysis, but faces in the opposite direction. The centre of the self (a point so small as to be non-existent) in the middle of its contextual circumference (time and space) gropes towards the timeless and spaceless centre of the universe. In the most ancient of Hindu Vedic writings it is written that in the beginning there was a state of perfection which became humanised and personalised by humans as God. You cannot be a scientist but you are a human being and your thinking is inevitably shaped accordingly. Therapy therefore does not only 'shrink*' into smaller and smaller circles but also expands and focuses on the vast context of the

social and universal, unravelling and disentangling in a bid for liberation; therapy is both reductive and totalising. The mind through a series of meanings finally ends up at the still point of truth. Where metaphysics ends, religion begins. Similarly where therapy ends, faith begins. Greek philosophical speculations end up in religious belief. Modern man's predicament is that when asked what is man? cannot go further than reply that he was an ape. The enormous help of using the mind to talk about these things. The Word, entering the world of symbols. In the beginning chapter of St John, the Word was God. The Hindus had used exactly the same words, several centuries previously.

But this totalising procedure has first to address the global Socio-Cultural context within which the Median Group is ensconced, and to do which it has first to have established its own microcultural power. Since dialogue is the supreme art, the Median Group is the supreme agent, linking the familo-tribal with the socio-cultural.

Resistance to the Median Group has been widespread with the result that the Society and Institute of Group Analysis continue to play ludo on a chess board, that is training people in small groups, themselves included ('committees') without recognising that they themselves have become a large group. In the same manner, Freud interpreted the horde as if it were a family writ-large.

However many people have become involved with our Median Group Seminar and my book "Koinonia". Valuable work has been achieved for instance by Dave Parsons and Peter Garrett in the prison service. This has proved successful and certainly more successful than early attempts to introduce small groups, since the latter stirred up the past, whilst the Median Group addresses the social present and the future.

Much of this has been written about in the publication "Structures of Meaning" and exploration of dialogue by Anthony Blake, Steve Mitchell and Janet Young - Duversity Text, published by the UNIS Institute, USA 1996. They write (p.20) "any step towards the coalescence of the diversity between people can be understood as making present higher intelligence between us", "relating one to all by means of meaning", "Kierkegaard brought the individual subject and discourse in a way that had never been done before" (p.30), "Logos is meaning" (p.3 8), "Ecological disaster stems from cultural inadequacy" (p.39). "Intrinsic connection" between meditation and dialogue.

The Median Group confronts us with the greater responsibility towards the global sociopolitical surrounding us and are often inadequate and faulty macrocultures, even though this is criticised as being 'evangelical' (Greek for good news). Above all, they have the expertise to do this which exists nowhere else. And this is in no way impracticable. Let us say it took 30 years for the small group approach to become universal, e.g. if a Median group of 20 met for 2 years, and if each member launched a further group of 20 in 10 years, several million people would be in dialogue. It is hoped that this will render a less bleak millennium, this mediating principle indicating a therapeutic function as distinct from the posing of senseless questions in philosophy. It is, as we have already said, commonplace for psychologists to seek the support of the natural sciences, in their linear thinking, but it is for psychologists to reverse this process by mediating the ordering of matter by mind.

Fairy stories help us sleep, bring peace and like philosophy have healing effects; we don't necessarily believe them. Vedas and the Psalms foster optimism; music, poetry, narrative, and art do the same. Perhaps Logos, cosmic reasoning, go beyond human meaning and begin to touch upon the truth for which we all hunger.

Summary

So what are the more outstanding contributions to group analysis which I would like to see retained or reclaimed particularly from my own experiences over 60 years as a therapist?

The first and most relevant would be the continued interest in the Median Group, theoretical and applied. The term Median Group is one that I suggested and it has been patented.

The second is the discovery that psychology and religion should be given primacy in their own right and that they should not have to seek respectability in the natural sciences.

The third one is to appreciate that there is a philosophy of therapy which should take precedence and that this has a framework based on structure, process, content, metastructure and totalisation based on five dimension, namely linear, dual, triadic, tetradic and a fifth dimension which I have found to be appropriate as guidelines in applying the Median Group technique and in individual therapy.

The fourth contribution is the immensely important distinction that must be made to differentiate between the bodily sexuality of procreation and the psychic characteristic of eroticism of creativity. The former must by necessity be rigorously controlled and the latter should be encouraged to be freely cultivated and given full promiscuous status and is in fact an anti-depressant to address the puritan culture, which opposes both the erotic together with the sexual.

The fifth consideration is the introduction of a new and key word, namely Kunta, which is the dual antinomy of Phallos but for women, which establishes the birth of dialogue, and which enables duality to be applied as part of the therapeutic lever and is vital in the addressing of unbridled phallocentricity.

And lastly, the significant relationship of hate as the driving power of mind and mental energy. The linear dimension which is basically frustrating to the mind which reflects it via the duality, transforms it via the third dimension of dialogue and as a result of this symbolic world of the word is able to grapple and grope, unravel and disentangle the bodily traumata of the first dimension and in this process generate the microculture of Koinonia or impersonal fellowship, of loving your neighbour. This total processing depends greatly on the skill and expertise of where to apply the therapeutic lever, which of the five dimensions. The excitement over the third phase of the Millennium which is a Christian notion is over the challenge as to whether Christianity will survive or not.

Addendum

The following is a suggested list of some of the potential characteristics of the mind. In the first place it is an agent for reflecting the linear and is therefore a thinking process which is human, personal and unique. It is space and time orientated and its main feature is to observe both the linear and the total. It is capable of choice and decision making. It is capable of reductive analysis (psychiatrists are referred to as "Shrinks"). It is also capable of totalising, wholeness, wholesome, healing; it is also erotic as distinct from sexual. It is capable of minding and caring and loving. It is emotional as distinct from sensational, capable of happiness and joy, and experiences suffering as distinct from pain. It faces in two directions, namely the linear on one side and the single-minded universal on the other. It registers meaning and focuses in the final resort on the truth. We all

hunger for the truth. The part of the mind which is God orientated is generally known as the soul (in the image of God). It is therefore sometimes named Seer or Seeker. It is involved with finding the plot, the story, and whilst not necessarily believing in fairy stories, finds them part of a healing process which enables sleep. It participates in dialogue, thereby creating microcultures. We suffer not from lack of individual thoughtfulness but from the shattering of such intelligence and mindfulness by effete pathological cultures, which have to be side-stepped by discovering alternatives so that the microculture is no longer an extension of that culture but a dualistic reflection. There has been a curious resistance to this radically new development in group techniques, often taking the form of arranging matters in such a manner that members simply fail to attend; the chief resistance to the median group is not to turn up. The alternative for being single minded is a dual manifestation - the Other; Erotic as distinct from Sexual. The first step towards mind is a duality of two people, of two brains, the area between brains.

In a sense all philosophers are psychotherapists manques. What I have attempted to do is to use my life long experience in psychotherapy to act as a yardstick in extricating philosophical ideas that are applicable and helpful in the group and in psychotherapy. Sixty years of listening and exchanging with clients several hours a day has given me a certain advantage. I cannot think of any philosopher however sophisticated in matters of the mind who can boast of having the edge of such an experience. The reverse of this of course does not obtain and there are a great many therapists who are philosophers manques and I trust they will forgive my inexpertise.

For instance, I cannot possibly agree with Descartes' assumption that mind and soul are synonymous nor on another front with Freud's interchangeability of psyche and mind, since for me psyche is erotic and must be retained as distinct from sexual: its cultivation is therapeutic; sexual on the other hand is procreative and has necessarily to be controlled. The process of establishing the second dimension of mind is equivalent to the radical reflection, the reduction, the bracketing or Epoche, the suspension of belief and of presupposition of the phenomenologists, or the pure consciousness of the Hindu term samadhi.

If you cannot convincingly articulate a plot for your life you are living a broken story. We actively participate in the creation of our stories. If we discern a plot to our lives we are more likely to take ourselves and our lives more seriously. Dialogue creates a form of story-telling and plot, and attempts to clarify the situation, equivalent therefore to therapy as distinct from the obscurity, the mystification, the seemingly obfuscation of philosophical texts.

Lacan has written about dialogue, which he calls discourse, that "the omnipresence of human discourse will perhaps one day be embraced under the open sky of an omniconmunication of its text. This is not to say that human discourse will be any more harmonious than now. But this is the field that our experience polarises in a relation that is only apparently two-way, for any positioning of its structure in merely dual terms is as inadequate to it in theory as is ruinous for its technique." This is in fact why we have introduced dialogue as the third dimension (to resolve inadequacy of remaining dual). I gather that he regards this human discourse as a matter of perhaps one day, whilst we have been applying it for over twenty years.