

The Book of Abstracts

ATHENS · 26–30 AUGUST 2026

4 keynote lectures · 18 sub-plenaries · 57 paper presentations · 24 workshops

KEYNOTE SESSIONS

OPENING LECTURE — WEDNESDAY

Prof. Gerasimos Makris (Greece)

The Price of Life is Death: Ritual Symbolism, Identity Construction, and Regenerative Violence

RESPONDER

Dr Domenico Agresta (Italy)

Violence and Ritual; Group and Thought. The Polyclitean Chiasmus in Group Analysis and the Concept of the Pharmakós

KEYNOTE SESSION — THURSDAY

Dr Christopher Scanlon (United Kingdom)

Unhoused Minds and Inhospitable environments: Xenophilia/phobia and Agoraphobia/philia in the context of global warming

RESPONDER

Dr Gila Ofer (Israel)

From disappointment to dreaming: restoring the capacity to think together. Beyond sacrifice: thinking after disappointment.

KEYNOTE SESSION — FRIDAY

Prof. Dr Sotiris Livas (Greece)

Giving birth to statues? Faith groups between Truth and Identity

RESPONDER

Prof. Roberta Mineo (Italy)

From Certainty to Shared Meaning. A group-analytic response to Sotiris Livas' Giving Birth to Statues?

KEYNOTE SESSION — SATURDAY

Dr Franca Fubini (Italy)

Binocular vision and the movement in between.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Dimitrios Tachmatzidis (Greece)

Mirror-Image Pharmakós: When Each Side Becomes the Other's Scapegoat. — Parallel Transgenerational Atmospheres in the Greek Civil War

The ancient Greek concept of pharmakós—simultaneously remedy and poison, saviour and scapegoat—provides a compelling lens for understanding intergenerational transmission of polarised group identities. This paper examines how the unresolved trauma of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) perpetuates a mutual scapegoating dynamic across three generations.

Qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews (2022-2023) with survivors and descendants of the Greek Civil War examined narrative patterns of enemy construction, chosen traumas (Volkan, 2001), and transgenerational atmospheres (Bakó & Zana, 2018).

The data reveal a striking symmetrical structure: both Left and Right construct the opposing side as pharmakós—a contaminating other who must be expelled to restore purity. Each group maintains parallel transgenerational atmospheres characterised by: (1) mutually exclusive chosen traumas ("White Terror" executions versus "child abductions"); (2) spatiotemporal collapse, where past violence remains psychologically present; (3) prohibition of dialogue transmitted atmospherically to descendants; (4) mirror-image enemy constructions wherein each side projects its own disavowed violence onto the other.

Participants' narratives demonstrate negative mirroring (Zinkin, 1983): "We don't speak with them" appears identically across both groups, maintaining boundary rigidity through silent transmission. This creates what we term "parallel atmospheres"—two identical structures with opposing content, each requiring the other as enemy to preserve group identity.

The pharmakós mechanism operates bidirectionally: each group needs the other as scapegoat to maintain cohesion. Without mutual recognition of parallel chosen traumas and collective mourning work, the polarisation perpetuates indefinitely. The paper proposes group-analytic interventions drawing on Foulkesian matrix theory and Volkan's psychopolitical dialogue model to address this frozen conflict structure.

Understanding Civil War polarisation through the pharmakós lens reveals how scapegoating becomes institutionalised across generations, offering pathways for dialogue and reconciliation in divided societies.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Dimitrios Tachmatzidis (Greece)

with Georgia Papatsouni, Eirini Charokopou

The Group as Pharmakós: Silent Transmission in the Intergenerational Life of Greek Historical Trauma

This sub-plenary session presents a three-strand investigation into the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma within the Greek context, framed through the concept of the group as Pharmakós — simultaneously scapegoat, poison, and remedy carried across generations.

The first presentation reports findings from a mixed-methods study (N=25, age range 64–96) involving survivors and witnesses of the Greek Civil War (1945–1949) and the Polytechnic Uprising (17 November 1973). Using the Greek-validated International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ/ICD-11) and the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ), the study reveals that whilst 88% of participants do not meet full clinical criteria for PTSD or C-PTSD, the Civil War cohort demonstrates systematically elevated subclinical symptomatology — particularly in avoidance of internal reminders and emotional numbing. A significant correlation between Disturbances in Self-Organisation (DSO) and avoidant attachment implicates attachment disruption as a core transmission mechanism. Semi-structured interviews illuminate how political polarisation operated as a Pharmakós dynamic: both left and right experienced exile and exclusion, whilst intra-familial political splits reproduced societal fractures across generations.

The second presentation introduces, for the first time internationally, psychometrically validated instruments derived from Vamik Volkan's theoretical framework — developed and validated in a sample of Pontic Greek descendants. This ongoing work operationalises key Volkanian constructs (chosen trauma, deposited representation, transgenerational transmission) and represents a methodologically significant contribution to the empirical study of large-group trauma.

The third presentation draws on 14 semi-structured interviews with Greek mental health professionals, mapping the therapeutic landscape for intergenerational trauma in Greece. Practitioners deploy an integrative repertoire spanning EMDR, somatic approaches, narrative and psychodynamic therapy, and systemic interventions — revealing sophisticated clinical awareness alongside the persistent challenge of working with socially unacknowledged historical suffering.

Collectively, these contributions propose that the group — family, political faction, or national community — functions as Pharmakós: the bearer of accumulated pain and, when recognised, the site of its transformation.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Elisabeth Rohr (Germany)

with Carla Penna, Domenico Agresta

Failing Dependencies in Groups and Institutions

This paper is part of the 3 day panel about the Social Unconscious and the Foundation Matrix organised by Carla Penna and others...

Recent sociological, psychoanalytical, and group-analytical debates emphasize that today's society increasingly suffers from a chronic weakness in terms of boundaries and orientation, creating difficulties to form lasting bonds. Instead, the focus is on a cultural climate of demands for instant gratification, the omnipresence of narcissistic self-promotion, and the avoidance of ambivalence and ambiguity. At the same time internal and interpersonal conflict is experienced as an imposition and not as something that is part of human nature, instead considered as a disturbance of the claim to frictionless (co-)existence.

Following Earl Hopper's theoretical considerations on trauma in groups, the social unconscious, and the foundation matrix, his findings are used to show how these previously indicated social processes are reflected, mirrored and acted out in groups and institutions. The main point is to show that “failed dependencies” lead not only to weak and vulnerable human networks, but also to weak and vulnerable social institutions, finally creating a “BANI world”: A world that is described as brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible, and therefore no longer creative and productive. The essential question therefore is, how can change or a promising future be realized under these conditions?

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Haim Weinberg (USA)

Using the Social Unconscious to Understand Psychological Organizations

This presentation focuses on the challenges of maintaining a non-binary perspective on social and political processes in today's world. We are all aware that splitting and divisiveness have become ubiquitous. Public discourse has become increasingly extremist, and people are less able to listen to one another. Central to the group analytic view is the social unconscious: the shared, co-constructed unconscious shaped by historical trauma, collective memory, and cultural forces. At a time when polarization threatens societies and professional organizations alike, it is essential to understand unconscious social processes for cultivating a resilient, open-minded psychological organizations.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dimitrios Karamanavis (Greece)

with Angelika Arvanitopoulou

Trauma and the Fracture of Historicity : Time, Topos, and Pharmakos in the Foundation Matrix

This session brings together two linked papers. It is built on three etymologically related Greek terms that clarify different functions in the management of trauma. Pharmakon (Φάρμακον), denotes a remedy, a curing drug, and by extension a medium of transformation. Pharmaki (Φαρμάκι), denotes poison and names what cannot be symbolised and urgently in need of discharge. Pharmakós (Φαρμακός) names the social and group mechanism through which a community or a group attempts to resolve traumatic pressure. Pharmakós is the operator that can tip the field towards Pharmakon, when it supports containment or towards Pharmaki, when it enacts a sacrificial logic.

The first paper examines time as a key operator within the foundation matrix and traces how trauma alters temporality along this axis. Time can function as Pharmakon, a reflective medium through which trauma may be metabolised into meaningful relatedness. When mourning remains unworked, post-traumatic experience persists as impending registers rather than becoming organised collective experience, and time becomes Pharmaki, persecutory, concrete, and asymbolic. Under these conditions, splitting between offenders and victims intensifies, the past fails to become memory, the present becomes an ever-renewed immediacy of terror, duration is negated, and historicity splinters.

The second paper approaches trauma as emerging in the analytic therapy group through the foundation matrix, preceding the group's meeting and yet appearing within it as a structuring pattern of relationships. The social dimension of trauma resonates through equivalents within the group's dynamic matrix and within the personal matrices of members, shaping both place and time and configuring identity as a capacity for continuity of being and for historicity. A clinical vignette from a therapy group negotiating Tempi grounds how social trauma enters the here and now of the analytic situation. The session concludes with a structured discussion of convergences, tensions, and clinical and societal implications.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Lillian Markaki (Greece)

with MANOLIS KATSIKAS, DIMITRIOS TACHMATZIDIS

Art as Pharmakós: One Hundred Years of the Psychology of Art and Its Relevance to Group Analysis

One hundred years after Lev S. Vygotsky completed *The Psychology of Art* (1925), his foundational thesis — that art functions as a "social technique of emotions" — acquires renewed significance within the Group Analytic tradition. This sub-plenary revisits Vygotsky's centenary work through the prism of the Symposium's theme: the figure of Pharmakós, simultaneously remedy and poison, instrument of transformation and locus of destruction.

For Vygotsky, the aesthetic response is inherently paradoxical. Art does not resolve emotional conflict; it provokes contradictory affects and channels them towards catharsis — a complex transformation rather than a simple discharge. This ambivalence mirrors precisely the logic of Pharmakós: the work of art both wounds and heals, unsettles and integrates, excludes and binds. In an era increasingly dominated by evidence-based approaches, the study of art risks being sidelined — yet it remains indispensable for understanding the depths of human nature and relationship.

The sub-plenary explores this ambivalence across three perspectives. The first examines Vygotsky's psychology of art as a precursor to Group Analytic thinking: aesthetic emotion as socially mediated experience, catharsis as collective rather than purely individual, and art as operating at the boundary between the personal and the cultural. The second demonstrates how Dostoevsky's polyphonic narration — in which no single consciousness dominates — functions as a proto-Group Analytic technique, offering group analysts new perspectives that enrich and strengthen clinical work. The third examines the paternal figure in art and therapy: how representations of paternal authority, from its pre-modern identification with law and tradition to its contemporary destabilisation and absence, carry the ambivalence of Pharmakós. Art is proposed as a transitional space in which the paternal function can be represented, worked through, and therapeutically transformed within the analytic group.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Gila ofer (Israel)

Pharmakós in Times of Rupture: Collective Trauma and the Social Unconscious

In periods of collective rupture, when history presses urgently into the present and social bonds are strained, groups become containers for what cannot yet be symbolized. This presentation uses the mythological figure of Pharmakós, at once scapegoat and remedy, as a conceptual lens for understanding how collective trauma is carried, enacted, and potentially transformed within the social unconscious.

Drawing on the group analytic notion of the tripartite foundation matrix (personal, social, and cultural-historical), I examine how socio-historical trauma becomes embedded in the matrix and reemerges in contemporary group life. In the context of ongoing collective trauma in Israel, analytic and large-group settings reveal processes of polarization, fragmentation, and negative mirroring, alongside the unconscious production of scapegoat figures who come to embody disavowed collective anxieties and grief.

Following Hopper's formulation of incohesion, collective trauma may push groups toward aggregation (defensive isolation) or massification (fusion and loss of differentiation). In both movements, unbearable affect risks being evacuated into a Pharmakós.

Building on Loewald's understanding of psychic transformation, I suggest that structural change, both intrapsychic and socio-historical, requires a reorganization of internal object relations within living relational matrices. The social unconscious and the internal world are thus mutually constitutive: the group becomes the place where historical residues seek form and, under certain conditions, where repetition may give way to symbolization.

The question guiding this presentation is: under what conditions can the scapegoat cease to function as a repository of projected trauma and instead become a mediator of meaning?

If a group can remain in relation to what it most wishes to expel, the Pharmakós need not be sacrificed. What has been cast out may gradually gain voice, and where history once compelled repetition, the work of thinking may begin to alter its course.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Marina Mojovic (Serbia)

Foundation Matrix and Founding Myth Ruptures. Bridging Psychoanalytic Fields as Pharmakos.

Ruptures of the foundation matrix, which reach the depth of the founding myths, have special meaning in social unconscious. An example is Serbia's Founding Myth of St Sava: the 11th-century socially transformative family story at the beginning of Nemanjić Dynasty: father Stefan (later St Simeon), mother Ana (St Anastasia, sometimes called the mother of the Serbs), and their youngest son Rastko, who became St Sava. Serbs are often called "St Sava's People" - he established ecclesiastical law, the autocephalic Serbian church, schools and literature, medicine, and diplomacy. 350 years after his death, Ottoman grand vizier Sinan Pasha, intending to destroy Serbs' determination to freedom, ordered to take St Sava's relics from Mileševa monastery, exposing them all through villages and towns, bringing to Belgrade, and then burnt the relics in front of the citizens' mass. At that place is St Sava's Temple and National Library, placed there after a similar sort of concrete and symbolic foundation matrix rupture: namely, our major Library was burnt by the very 1st Nazi bomb onto Belgrade in 1941. Attempts of reparation include literature and other cultural events held in the huge hole that remains where the beautiful library once stood.

In tripartite matrices of our group-analytic groups, including those of the applied work, as are reflective citizens koinonia, we encounter various manifestations of those ruptures, which include "old ghosts in new cloths". Significant efforts and wisdom are needed to enable transformative pharmakos in our work, especially in times of poli-crisis. Sibling rivalries among psychoanalytic fields have been impacting group analysis and its subsystems since Northfield (Hopper, 2022,xix), but "bringing them together in a space where there could be some constructive work among these various subgroups may make real creative use." (Hopper, October, 2025).

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Judith Enders (Germany)

with Helena Klimova

Parental needs in Group Analytic Settings and Institutions

Patriarchal ideologies profoundly shape the constitution of subjectivity in group-analytic settings and institutional contexts by inscribing intergenerational narratives of authority, paternalism, democracy and fatherhood, as well as implicit phenomena such as racism and antisemitism, into processes of transference, projective identification and group defense systems. These dynamics generate restricted self-representations and relational entanglements that may be reproduced or interrupted through the positioning of leaders and institutional roles.

Group-analytic institutions frequently embody a “motherless” structure: despite a female majority in membership, male leaders, lecturers and presidents have tended to dominate their history, with only isolated women in key roles – perceived at times as traumatizing, at other times as heroically unifying. This systematic silencing of maternal principles stands in contrast to the institutionalized reliance on a (redeeming) father figure and raises questions about parental needs: why do groups and institutions long for an omnipotent benevolent paternal authority, while the “good enough mother” – in Winnicott’s sense of relational sufficiency – remains marginalized?

Theoretical framework: The panel discussion integrates psychoanalytic, group-analytic and cultural-analytic perspectives with thematic analyses of narratives and group processes. It explores cultural scripts of father figures and moral authority, as well as authoritarian enactments in transcultural contexts that either silence or enable dissent.

Points for discussion:

- * How might reflective leadership interventions transform parental defense systems and foster collective meaning-making through narrative pluralization?
- * Which institutional policies address the silencing of maternal principles and strengthen relational balance?
- * What is the potential of corrective relational experiences for enhancing agency, democracy and the reconfiguration of authority?

The discussion recommends culturally attuned training, supervision and policy development that work through structural inequalities psychodynamically and establish a balance between paternal strength and maternal relationality.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Carla Penna (Brazil)

The Social Unconscious: Confusion of Tongues and Pharmakos in Colonised Countries

In the last twenty years, the social unconscious project has investigated the vicissitudes of tripartite matrices in various countries. In the social unconscious of former colonies, the researcher is invited to observe the figurations in which structural violence, social trauma, habitus, ethnocentric myths, and transgenerational transmission of traumatic experience impact the development of a person's subjectivity and his/her interpersonal and transpersonal relations. In 1933, Ferenczi introduced the concept of 'confusion of tongues' to discuss trauma and its vicissitudes. He presented the difference between the 'language of tenderness' and the 'language of passion' in situations of seduction between a child and an adult, describing the traumatic consequences for the development of the child's subjectivity, marked by experiences of disavowal and identification with the aggressor. Grounded in psychoanalytic and group analytic perspectives – and reflections undertaken by Hernández de Tubert (2021) and Penna (2022) in the *Journal of Group Analysis* – this presentation proposes a dialogue between interpersonal patterns of colonial oppression and Ferenczian's 'confusion of tongues' that can enlighten social unconscious reflections on former colonies. Making use of Hopper's (2003) process of equivalence in contexts marked by trauma, the concept of 'confusion of tongues' evidences a 'relational pattern' unconsciously established for interpersonal and transpersonal relations involving oppression, the so-called superiority and purity of races, as well as 'othering' and scapegoating processes. In this sense, the traumatic and essential ambiguity present in the confusion of tongues between adult-child as well as in the polysemic message conveyed by the Ancient Greek concept of Pharmakon – remedy or poison – allows us to understand the anatomy of the ambiguity of the 'relational patterns' in interpersonal and transpersonal relations between colonisers and colonised persons. This psychodynamics involves defences such as projection, introjection, incorporation and identification with the aggressor as well as mirroring and scapegoating processes.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Konstantinos Morogiannis (Greece)

with Kalliopi Panagiotopoulou, Ioannis Minogiannis, Stamatina Katsiveli

The Pharmakós of Group Analysis: Aristotle, Christian Community, and Radical Group Analysis

The classic psychoanalytic arrangement – patient on the couch and analyst out of sight – where the analyst listens and interprets from strict neutrality, echoes the natural-science model of Freud's era: the study of an entity by an observer who neither affects it nor is affected by it. Developments in the natural sciences, psychoanalytic theory, and the study of groups led to a newer model, in which what becomes paramount is the relationship between an entity and the field of forces within which it encounters others.

This sub-plenary addresses the Symposium's theme of "Group as Pharmakós" by tracing how group analysis emerges from traditions that are inherited, disrupted, and transformed. Foulkes put this model into practice by creating the first analytic group in Exeter in 1939. We argue that its theoretical foundations – beyond psychoanalysis – draw on Aristotelian philosophy, are enriched by the theology of early Christian communities, and integrate Elias' sociology into radical Group Analysis.

The group-individual dialectic at the core of radical theory is already introduced in Aristotle's ontology, especially in his theses on the relation between "whole" and "part". This is the focus of the first presentation. The saying "Unus Christianus – Nullus Christianus", attributed to either Saint Cyprian or Tertullian, leads to the theology of Florovsky and Zizioulas, resonating with Aristotelian dialectic and Group Analysis. This is the focus of the second presentation. The synthesis of these ideas with Elias' sociology (1978) in Foulkesian thought leads to radical group analysis and will be discussed in the third presentation.

Foulkes, a refugee in "Kleinian London", acts as Pharmakós: he introduces provocative ideas into psychoanalysis, yet also retreats from them, as suggested by the oscillation between orthodox and radical Foulkes (Dalal, 1998). Thus, group analysis becomes a field in which tradition, negative mirroring, injury, healing, creativity, and innovation meet.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Konstantinos Liolios (Greece)

Pharmakos, Foundation Matrix, and the Social Unconscious in Contemporary Societies — A Group-Analytic Inquiry into Hybris, Catharsis, Eleutheria, and Harmonia

This paper reinterprets the ancient Greek concept of the Pharmakos as a structural dynamic embedded in the foundation matrix of contemporary societies. In archaic ritual, the Pharmakos was a marginal figure expelled during periods of crisis to restore communal equilibrium. Drawing on S. H. Foulkes' theory of the group matrix and later elaborations of the social unconscious, the paper argues that this figure represents not merely a historical practice but a recurring psychosocial process that emerges when collective anxiety surpasses a society's symbolic capacity for containment. The Pharmakos thus marks an oscillation within the social field between expulsive discharge and integrative transformation.

Through an interdisciplinary dialogue between group analysis and classical philosophy, the paper develops four conceptual axes—hybris, catharsis, eleutheria, and harmonia—to illuminate this movement. Hybris denotes collective excess and collapse of measure (metron), often manifesting in polarized certainty and defensive inflation. Catharsis is reconceived not as purgative release but as symbolic metabolization, paralleling analytic containment processes that transform raw affect into shared meaning. Eleutheria situates freedom within relational responsibility and participatory dialogue, underscoring the democratic necessity of reflective capacity (phronesis). Finally, harmonia offers a model of dynamic equilibrium grounded in tensioned plurality rather than homogeneity.

The paper concludes that contemporary democratic societies oscillate structurally between sacrificial regression and reflective solidarity. By rendering the social unconscious thinkable within dialogical institutions, the ambivalence of the pharmakon—both poison and remedy—can become a resource for ethical renewal and sustainable communal life.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Ronnie Levine (USA)

with Avi Berman, Nimer Said

Vilification Vengeance and Violence: the psychosocial politics of love and hate-- The USA arena; Incitement to hatred on social networks, and group therapy as an antidote; Between Betrayal and Differentiation: A Personal Account of Loss, Loyalty, and the Price of “Location” in Group Analysis

Infectious worldwide hate and violence has compelled us to reflect on how these dynamics penetrate the social unconscious and operate on a national, social and person level.

Vilification Vengeance and Violence: the psychosocial politics of love and hate-The USA arena – Ronnie Levine, Ph.D.

I will analyze hate and in particular- the enjoyment of vengeance - retribution

I will explore the national leader’s role that foments and the psychosocial climate that allows for it. I will examine how this interactional dynamic has penetrated the psyche, allowing for an increase normalization of transgressive cruelty.

I will study how this has also seeped in the US Large Group experience.

Incitement to hatred on social networks, and group therapy as an antidote

Avi Berman, Ph.D

The universal division into “us and them” fosters group cohesion while serving as a social defense mechanism, projecting rejected aspects onto an opposing group. Social networks amplify this dynamic by creating closed, self-contained bubbles that satisfy members’ emotional and epistemological needs. Such divisions can be exploited by leaders who incite hatred and strengthen hostile cohesion to gain political power. In contrast, group therapy promotes encounters with otherness, exposing the limits of these bubbles and enabling dialogue. Reflective discourse offers a healing antidote to polarized hatred.

Between Betrayal and Differentiation: A Personal Account of Loss, Loyalty, and the Price of “Location” in Group Analysis – Nimer Said

This presentation examines the personal and professional impact of national identity in international psychoanalytic communities during conflict. After my Israeli identity became public at GASI Belgrade 2023, a close family relationship ruptured due to differing views on loyalty and betrayal in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Using group analytic theory, I discuss how group memberships—professional, national, and familial—can demand loyalty and make individuals symbolic, and how the social unconscious shapes relationships, often causing loss when communities reject complexity and difference.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Stavros Charalambides (Greece)

with Haim Weinberg

Reading the Unreadable: Foundation Matrices, Institutional Illiteracy and the Large Group From Unconscious Institutional Sediments to the Group as Pharmakós.

Reading the Unreadable: Foundation Matrices, Institutional Illiteracy and the Large Group

From Unconscious Institutional Sediments to the Group as Pharmakós

Large groups, whether institutional, organisational, or societal, carry within them layers of meaning that remain largely outside conscious awareness. This presentation takes as its central metaphor the act of reading and the failure to read the deep emotional and relational currents embedded in institutional life. Drawing on the concept of the social unconscious and the notion of foundation matrices as developed within the Group Analytic tradition, it explores what I have termed institutional illiteracy: the collective incapacity to decipher the historical, cultural, and transgenerational sediment upon which institutions are built. These unread texts are not accidental absences; they are structured forms of not-knowing, socially sanctioned and defensively maintained by the group-as-a-whole. Through clinical and organisational vignettes drawn from large group experience, the presentation examines how institutional illiteracy manifests as a failure to recognise shared unconscious assumptions, projective processes, and the silent enactment of unspoken social narratives. The large group is proposed as a privileged space where what cannot be read begins to surface and where the possibility of collective meaning-making may emerge. Implications for group analytic practice, institutional consultancy, and social transformation will be considered.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Stavros Charalambides (Greece)

with Haim Weinberg, Martha Gilmore

Rupture and Repair – When Is Repair Not Possible?

Rupture and repair have become central organizing concepts in contemporary relational and group-analytic thinking (Benjamin, 2004; Mitchell, 1997). Within therapy groups, training settings, and professional organizations, we often assume that when ruptures are named, mentalized, and metabolized within a containing matrix (Foulkes, 1964), repair is possible. But is this always the case? When does rupture exceed the reparative capacity of the group?

Drawing on group-analytic theory, particularly Foulkes' concept of the matrix and Hopper's (2019) work on incohesion and the Nitsun's anti-group (1996), this presentation explores conditions under which repair collapses or fails to emerge. Clinical and organizational vignettes from international process groups and polarized professional communities will be presented, especially in contexts of sociopolitical trauma. These examples illustrate how large-group anxieties and chosen traumas (Volkan, 1997), annihilation fears, and transgenerational transmission infiltrate small-group processes, transforming conflict into moral absolutism, splitting, and expulsion (Hopper & Weinberg, 2011; 2015; 2017).

Repair requires more than apology or insight; it requires a minimally shared symbolic space, a functioning "third" (Benjamin, 2004), capable of holding difference without annihilation. When members experience the other as fundamentally illegitimate, or when power asymmetries foreclose mutual recognition, the group may shift from dialogue to survival mode. In such states, enactment replaces reflection, and rupture becomes structural rather than relational.

The sub plenary will examine several thresholds at which rupture may not be repairable: collapse of trust in authority, loss of shared reality, severe humiliation, activation of the anti-group, and unacknowledged structural inequity. It will also consider the ethical question of whether repair should always be the goal, or whether, at times, separation or boundary-setting is developmentally and morally necessary.

Understanding when repair is not possible deepens our grasp of the fragile conditions under which repair becomes genuinely transformative.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Thor Kristian Island (Norway)

with Vasili Magalios, Marina Mojovic, Elisabeth Rohr, Katalin Miszler

Group Analytic Training in Europe: Similarities, Differences and Challenges

Group analytic training across Europe is united by a shared theoretical heritage and structural foundation, yet marked by significant variation across national and institutional contexts. This Round Table examines convergences and divergences among training programmes affiliated with the European Group Analytic Training Institutions Network (EGATIN), representing over forty institutions across more than twenty countries.

All qualifying programmes adhere to a tripartite structure comprising personal therapy in a small group, theoretical seminars, and supervised clinical practice. Rooted in the Foulkesian tradition, they share a commitment to understanding the individual within the social matrix.

Significant differences emerge in delivery format, academic accreditation, entry requirements, and relationship to national regulatory frameworks. Some programmes operate through continuous weekly contact; others rely on intensive blocks training format. Certain institutes confer postgraduate academic awards while others grant professional qualifications outside the academy.

A central dimension of divergence concerns theoretical development beyond the Foulkesian paradigm. Post-Foulkesian thinkers such as Dalal have drawn on Norbert Elias and discourse theory to place socio-political forces at the heart of psychic life, while the relational and intersubjective turn has introduced concepts such as enactment and co-created meaning into group analytic thinking. Contemporary programmes increasingly engage with attachment theory, personality theory, and mentalisation theory. Attachment perspectives have enriched understanding of group cohesion, leadership, and change, while mentalisation-based approaches — addressing the capacity to reflect on one's own and others' mental states — have become particularly relevant in work with personality disorders and emotional dysregulation. Programmes vary considerably in the extent to which these frameworks are integrated alongside classical group analytic theory.

Key challenges include the tension between standardisation and cultural diversity, the EGATIN's Essential Training Standards compared to national regulatory bodies, and an ongoing debate about how emerging theories can enrich - without diluting - a distinctively group analytic identity

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Domenico Agresta (Italy)

From Eternal biological childhood to the narrative of incompleteness. Neoteny and Foundation Myths

In group analysis, the concept of neoteny is used to describe the structural incompleteness of the human being and their consequent vital need for social bonds. Human beings are born ‘biologically immature’ and require a long period of care and learning. Authors such as Diego Napolitani and Raffaele Menarini have explored this connection in depth, theorising that individual identity arises from the interplay between ‘identifications’ (what we inherit from the group) and the subject’s creative capacity to rework them in an original way. From this perspective, the group acts as a kind of extension of the mother’s protective environment. It is within the group that the individual acquires the tools to complete their development, internalising what is referred to as the matrix (the set of languages, values and relational patterns of their environment). The myth of Prometheus is often cited as the founding myth of the human condition of neoteny. In the myth, humans are born naked and defenceless because Prometheus’s brother, Epimetheus, distributed all the natural gifts (wings, claws, fur) to the other animals. This is the mythological representation of neoteny. Prometheus stole fire and the knowledge of the arts, sciences, and technical skills (instead of stole fire and technology) from the gods to give them to mankind. From the perspective of Subjective Group Analysis, this act symbolises the birth of the cultural matrix: mankind survives not by instinct, but through the meanings and tools shared within the group. From this perspective we can say that the group represents the psychic intentionality of the SOCIAL in becoming.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Kavita Avula (USA)

Unconscious Social Processes in Organizations

The social unconscious encompasses the historical, cultural, and societal forces that subtly shape individuals' inner worlds. Just as we are unconsciously affected by our personal histories, families of origin, and past traumas, we are also shaped by the social environments we inhabit and the historical events that have marked them—especially collective social traumas. This presentation will explore unconscious social processes, including idealization, projection and scapegoating, in organizations and how to recognize them and effectively work through them. The presenter will offer compelling examples from 20 years of organizational consulting to human rights and humanitarian organizations.

The concept of the social unconscious offers valuable insights for understanding the key role of leaders and the importance of leadership and staff development, team dynamics, and the influence of broader social systems. Understanding an organization’s unwritten rules and “culture” can illuminate enactments that get in the way of progress.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Fiore Bello (Italy)

Multifamily psychoanalysis as a large group

Multifamily Psychoanalysis Group originated in the 1960s at the Barda mental hospital (Argentina) thanks to Jorge Badaracco who brought together to talk patients, their families and the staff. In this way, current situations could be analyzed, which were nothing more than a repetition of past traumatic situations. The power of the group «[...] consists exactly in the possibility that, through multiple transference between families and metaphorical mirroring, a broader mind of the group is created that allows us to think together what we cannot think alone and give the possibility that the healthy virtuality of the children, as well as the one of the parents take shape» Badaracco (2004). Within this Group –where is possible to deal with the individual, family, and social dimensions of the mind simultaneously- a person may be considered ill by his family members and at the same time be considered potentially healthy by many other members. Starting from the assumption that human beings live immersed in webs of pathogenic interdependencies, Badaracco argues that psychotic processes are based on pathogenic and pathological interdependencies that prevent the autonomy of the child and other family members. Interdependencies generally are not only explicit: they are also concealed, secret and often unconscious. However, they become a means by which the power of words can evoke emotions in others, a power that can cause illness or be healing, depending on the nature of the interdependencies at play. The multifamily psychoanalysis group my colleagues and I convene in a mental health center in Roma represents a micro-society of families with different backgrounds and different problems that, through dialogue, share experience, psychological suffering, discuss their difficulties and systematically support each other. To truly be an integral part of the group process, professionals should abandon the one-way concept of care.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Farhad Dalal (United Kingdom)

A Meditation on Hope in Times of Despair

This talk is a personal account of the struggle to find and sustain hope in these despairing times.

When faced by the grim reality of a world overrun by neoliberalism and right wing populists pedalling their politics of hate, violence and greed, when faced with the prospect of the sixth extinction, is it even worth the effort to look for hope? Where is the light in this ever darkening world – or has it already been extinguished?

This talk is my attempt to work my way towards hope. It is not certain that I will get there. It is a work in progress.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Shulamit Geller (Israel)

with Eran Shadach, Einav Karniel Lauer

Aggression as Pharmakos: Working with Groups in Times of Collective Trauma

Collective trauma thrusts society into a paradoxical space where aggression, both primary and defensive, emerges as a survival necessity which may be potentially destructive. In the aftermath of October 7th, mental health professionals in Israel confronted this duality many times and struggled to work with it across professional contexts. Drawing on the conference's Pharmakos theme, this presentation examines how aggression in groups may function as both poison and remedy when working with collective trauma and what can be done to successfully work with it.

Using a group-analytic and psychoanalytic lens, we examine three interlinked sites in which aggression's duality is most clinically and ethically alive, supervision, teaching, and therapy, drawing on brief vignettes and conceptual frames. First, in teaching, we address the challenge of transmitting group theory when familiar boundaries between safety and danger, clinician and patient, and ordinary and traumatic realities become unstable. We explore pedagogical moments in which educators invite trainees to recognize aggression's protective function without glorifying violence, to acknowledge destructive impulses without pathologizing survival responses, and to cultivate the capacity to hold paradox in their emerging practice. Second, in supervision, we consider how supervisors can contain therapists' aggression toward helplessness, paralysis, and retaliatory fantasies without disavowal or enactment, and how the supervisory group can metabolize societal rage and impotence into therapeutic agency. Third, in therapy, we present group-process vignettes illustrating how groups move from negative mirroring, and scapegoating where aggression reinforces isolation, splitting, and trauma reenactment, toward integrative functioning within the matrix, where aggression can be symbolized, negotiated, and transformed.

We argue that conceptualizing aggression as Pharmakós helps clinicians transcend binaries and meet aggression as a capacity that can harm and heal. In collective trauma, the group becomes both the site of psychic injury and potential repair.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

GINA CADEDDU (Italy)

The Agora of the Self: Transgenerational Trauma and the Transformation of the Pharmakos. Reflections on 15 Years of Clinical Practice in the Therapeutic Communities Maieusis and Reverie

This paper explores the dynamics of the Pharmakos within Italian post-Basaglian therapeutic communities, analysing how the group can function alternatively both as a maieutic matrix and a persecutory apparatus. Drawing on fifteen years of clinical experience at the Maieusis and Reverie communities, the author investigates the intersection of transgenerational trauma, institutional splitting, and psychosomatic response.

The Pharmakos, the mythological figure of the scapegoat, embodies the individual within care institutions who absorbs the toxic projections of the treating group. The experience documents how leadership splits and how the failure of the reverie function can lead the therapist towards traumatic saturation. In this context, the physical symptom—analysed through the lens of Gabor Maté—is interpreted as the body's extreme protest against the violation of authenticity.

The narrative moves towards healing by integrating lived experience into creative language and spiritual resilience. The author illustrates how a renewed faith in God, inspired by the lives of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the teachings of Pope Francis, acted as a primary container for reparation. Invoking the work of Danish writer Tove Ditlevsen, the paper shows how narrating trauma allows one to "open the windows" of the soul. The transition from psychophysical breakdown to rebirth through psychodrama and theatre marks the final transformation: the Pharmakos becomes an active subject within the Agora. In conclusion, the health of group analysis lies in the ability to integrate the shadow, transforming the "poison" of exclusion into the "medicine" of relational awareness and spiritual hope.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Cosmin Chita (Switzerland)

In defence of the „less good“ dream

An interaction with an AI model is presented as part of a thought experiment based on an event that took place during a social dreaming event. The social dreaming matrix is formulated as similar to the Foulkes matrix, as well as a collective assemblage of enunciation (Deleuze & Guattari). Resonance is essential for developing the matrix but remains a protean concept. The author differentiates between a pattern and an embodied resonance. Unlike AI models, the SDM activates both pattern and embodied resonance. AI cannot dream. This is not due to technical limitations, but rather, dreaming involves failing — allowing something to slip and not knowing what you're saying while saying it. Dreams require what artist William Kentridge calls "the less good idea": the capacity to produce something imperfect, unfinished, and vulnerable. In addition to dreaming, failure is also a deeply human characteristic. From this perspective, social dreaming appears to be a suitable device for exploring the human search for meaning, the urge to interpret, and the ability to produce "less good" dreams for psychohygienic purposes.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Theodora Skali (Greece)

The Conductor as Pharmakós in the Large Group: Silence, Authority, and the Emergence of Collective Voice

The Large Group offers a clinical field where authority, exclusion, and collective anxiety are not only discussed but enacted. Drawing on material from an experiential training Large Group, this paper explores how the archetype of Pharmakós—simultaneously remedy and poison—emerges within the role of the conductor and the group matrix.

In early sessions, members managed uncertainty through structured “games,” negotiated visibility via cameras and microphones, and hesitated to speak directly. Beneath these interactions, themes of sudden relocation, decisions taken “without being asked,” and unprocessed separations surfaced spontaneously. Narratives of school transfers, parental authority, and institutional imposition revealed deeper anxieties concerning belonging, voice, and exclusion.

The conductor's minimal interventions and moments of silence became a focal point of projection. At times experienced as containing and protective, at other times as intrusive or authoritarian, the conductor occupied an ambivalent position within the group. In this oscillation, the conductor functioned as Pharmakós—carrier of projected aggression, symbolic authority, and the group's ambivalence toward dependence and autonomy.

Clinically, the paper examines how negative mirroring operates in the Large Group and how silence can intensify primitive anxieties while simultaneously enabling symbolic elaboration. As members articulated their experience of authority and absence, the group gradually shifted from enactment to reflection. What initially appeared as avoidance evolved into shared inquiry.

The Large Group thus becomes a site where destructiveness need not culminate in scapegoating but may be metabolized into dialogue. Pharmakós illuminates the paradox at the heart of group analysis: the group injures and heals through the same relational field.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Kristian Valbak (Denmark)

Online Group Analysis - optional or a pragmatic solution in difficult circumstances?

Based on responses from 139 participants with experience of both online and in-person therapy groups to the EGATIN TOLIP survey, the question is raised whether online therapy and training can be an alternative to in-person groups. What facilitates the group process and what is experienced as an obstacle to the group analytic situation? What do participants prefer? The presentation will address the difficulties in determining, whether Group Analysis can develop in an on-line modality.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

niharika niharika (India)

Between home and exile: Safar as Pharmakós

For three years, Safar, a peer-led reflective community, has been travelling across places and inner landscapes. This year, I host it in my village in Kathua, a border district where periodic high alert and constant vigilance shape my everyday life. Opening my doors here feels both ordinary and radical to me. Kathua is home for me, but it is marked by terrorist activities, communal tension, and the psychological residues of living at a geopolitical edge. My work in group analysis is not easily mirrored in this setting. I belong through memory and kinship, but parts of my professional self remain unrecognised here. This ongoing split between belonging and invisibility forms the backdrop to hosting Safar here.

The concept of the Group as Pharmakós offers a frame for this paradox. Pharmakós, both remedy and poison, occupies a boundary between margin and centre. Foulkes stated that the group exists within a matrix shaped by social and historical forces, which provides a clearer perspective on this contrast. When Safar enters my home, it enters a space already saturated with my own anxieties and elements of the social unconscious. Although not a formal therapy group, Safar exhibits group-analytic sensibilities: shared authority, a dialogic process, and collective meaning-making. As host, I occupy a boundary position myself- a container and an exposed body. I wonder whether Safar can serve as pharmakós: metabolising the split between exile and home, holding the anxieties of safety, and transforming vigilance into shared reflection. Rather than resolving the fracture, the group symbolises it and, like any group setting, risks becoming an echo chamber. I question whether the anxieties will amalgamate like medicine, where addressing one heals the other, or will dissolve into poison, deepening scars old and new.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Ishani Badyal (India)

with Swathi Prabhu

Who is the scapegoat-Who is the container? Reflections on Destructiveness in Group Spaces

"By the crowd we have been broken, by the crowd we shall be healed" (Sandra Bloom, 1998) is an enticing idea. The temptation is often to focus on the healing, sometimes, without knowing what it takes to sit with what it is that has been broken and who all are complicit in the breaking.

The potential for creating group spaces is accompanied by the destructive potential in group spaces. We want to bring conversations on destruction from the margins to be included in the core of the discourse. Perhaps, to seek refuge in an absurd world. This paper articulates our experience of holding groups at tumultuous times, when the threat to safety and trust in many groups is undeniable.

We think about a religious figure - Shiva - with the capacity to witness and bear destruction. Shiva is a deity who holds poison in their throat to contain destruction. Ironically, he is worshipped as a deity that has to be kept calm and feared but rarely acknowledged for holding destruction.

This paper is our story as part of the first training cohort of group analysis in India as: individuals who have held their destructive tendencies while creating spaces, individuals with citizenship and statehood that have been used as scapegoats, and individuals who often scrutinize their actions internally in groups. We use this space to think about destructive impulses through these questions:

What goes on when you invite people to relate in groups when, socially, the multiplicity of thoughts is often stifled by appeals to be righteous?

What happens to the illusion of safety and trust when therapists with destructive fantasies are met with destructive projections from the group?

What goes on in the responses to vulnerability, discomfort, and violations in training spaces? What projections do trainees take on in their training?

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Alice Scognamiglio (Italy)

From Withdrawal to Group Engagement

Proposing psychotherapeutic care in a group setting to people who tend to disengage from social interactions could be considered a paradox. The present paper seeks to expose the work with a group of adolescents and young adults who exhibit a variety of severity in social withdrawal, highlighting how the group may constitute an appropriate therapeutic setting for this population, while critically examining the complexity and specific clinical challenges entailed in assembling relationally isolated individuals.

Considering the specificity of these patients, the clinical experience (Scognamiglio R.M. & Russo, 2018; Scognamiglio R.M., Russo & Fumagalli, 2024; Russo, 2025; Scognamiglio A., 2025) shows that it is necessary to work on a preliminary level: fostering the development of a secure base (Bowlby, 1988) outside the withdrawal space and in the group. Only when the group can be perceived as a comfort and safe place (as a possible alternative to the retreat space), the participants could access to relational, reflective and reparative dimensions (Schlapobersky, 2016).

Furthermore, nowadays it is observed that many youngsters in retreat are often NEET (Not engaged in Education, Employment or Training) (Bynner & Parson, 2002); to address this phenomenon, one level of Axolotl consists of psychoeducational support, aimed to reactivate the developmental trajectory of the participants. The other level is the group analytic setting, to facilitate group cohesion, the development of mentalization, and working through relational challenges.

The present paper seeks to describe on a clinical-theoretical level the course of the Axolotl group from a sum of monadic individuals towards a progressive configuration of the group-as-a-whole (Bion, 1961; Foulkes, 1964; Hinshelwood, 2007) and of a relational matrix (Schlapobersky, 2016).

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Jasmina Stojkovic Pavlovic (Serbia)

with Aleksandra Pantic

In the Vortex of Trauma

Trauma occurs to an individual or a group, however, its echo, its wave unfolds within a broader sociocultural context, which absorbs it, may contain and metabolize it, intensify it, or symbolically transform and reconfigure its meaning.

On May 3, 2023, in the heart of Belgrade, a thirteen-year-old student used his father's handgun to kill nine students, some of them his classmates, and a school security guard, while wounding five other children. Evidence later indicated that he had prepared in advance, compiling a list of intended targets.

Such an assault on the community can be likened to an atomic detonation: the immediate site of Impact is leveled, while the shockwave radiates outward, toppling structures far beyond the epicenter. In its aftermath, a kind of radioactive psychic fallout continues to descend for days, months, even years- fine invisible particles that settle into the social fabric. Like mnemonic traces, they persist across generations, compromising the vitality of the environment, but, paradoxically, this trace sustains memory, ensuring that the event can not be consigned to oblivion.

In this paper, we examine how trauma permeates and reshapes interconnected groups linked to the tragedy, from two perspectives: the therapeutic group of surviving students from class 7/2, with whom we worked for two years, and the perspective of the parent of a girl from that class, immersed in the shifting configurations of the many groups that crystallized in the aftermath of the massacre.

We were able to observe how groups may spontaneously become sites of healing and reparation, but also how readily they fragment or form basic assumptions, compromising thought process and capacity for containment.

Finally, we will attempt to explore how trauma reverberates within the wider social field and its social unconscious, laden with historical and political residues.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

KALLIOPI PANAGIOTOPOULOU (Greece)

The Therapeutic Value of the Group-Analytic Group for the Early Childhood Psychological Trauma Experienced While Raised by a Mentally Ill Parent

Early childhood psychological trauma, as it occurs in low status minority groups (refugees, poor, physically disabled, etc.) is linked to mental health disorders in adulthood. In my opinion, being raised by a parent – especially mother – suffering from mental health disease, also constitutes an early trauma: it imbues the infant with anxiety, later on resulting in feelings of shame, guilt, deficiency of self acceptance and integration, low self-esteem, sense of not belonging, not deserving and emptiness, disappointment, frustration, anger, depression, leading frequently to the appearance of emotion regulation difficulties, psychosomatic symptoms, borderline disorders, etc. These people feel fundamentally voiceless, as if speaking without being heard. They find no space and suffer in silence. The shame inherent with inadequacy, disability and stigma is stimulated by the presence of others. Working through is possible with the availability of others in the group-analytic group. Initially, the group member suffering from early trauma experience, perceives the group as a bad attacking devouring archaic mother, and is overwhelmed by annihilation anxiety. Gradually, the group enables a corrective emotional experience to occur, thus accepted as a good object, a good empathic and caring mother (Ivezić & Urlić, 2015). Hence, the group promotes the understanding of the hidden injury, giving voice to the unspoken (Schlapobersky, 2024). An important prerequisite in order to achieve therapeutic benefit is the careful selection of the group members as well as the application of modified group analytic psychotherapy by the conductor.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Daniel Anderson (United Kingdom)

Queering the Matrix: Analytic Silence, Sexuality, and the Social Unconscious in Group Analysis

This paper develops the concept of analytic silence through a queer-informed re-reading of group analysis, arguing that sexuality and gender often inhabit the unspoken regions of the analytic matrix not because they are marginal, but because they are structurally dense and affectively charged. Drawing on Foulkes' concept of the matrix, Bion's theory of containment, Matte-Blanco's bi-logic, and selected Jungian perspectives on symbol and shadow, the paper conceptualises the group as a historically saturated communicative field in which silence is organised rather than empty.

Rather than treating silence as individual inhibition, the paper frames it as a property of the field: a patterned absence shaped by institutional inheritance, heteronormative assumptions, and the regulatory effects of discourse. Early group-analytic theory, emerging within post-war European contexts, carried implicit assumptions about gender and sexuality that continue to structure contemporary speakability. What remains unsymbolised persists as an organising absence within the matrix.

Introducing "queering" as a methodological stance rather than an identity position, the paper proposes queering the matrix as a practice of slowing certainty, interrogating normativity, and attending to ambiguity as psychically meaningful. Through clinical vignettes, it demonstrates how micro-omissions, politeness, humour, and shifts in atmosphere can function as communications of the social unconscious. Matte-Blanco's distinction between symmetric and asymmetric logic is used to illuminate the tension between categorical identity and the fluidity of unconscious identification, while Bion's containment is reframed as a field capacity for co-thinking rather than a technical intervention.

The paper concludes by extending these ideas into supervision and training, proposing three interlocking matrices—clinical, supervisory, and socio-cultural—and offering practical reflective prompts. Queering the matrix becomes an ethical and generative commitment: to remain with what cannot yet be said, and to preserve group analysis as a living, self-reflexive tradition capable of thinking in the presence of difference.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

EVGENIA PAPARISTEIDOU (Greece)

From Pre-Symbolic Experience to Symbolic Articulation: Mirroring, Containment and Trauma Processing in Complex Group Systems

This presentation conceptualizes mirroring as an emergent process of the group matrix (Foulkes) rather than a linear interpersonal mechanism. Drawing on systemic and complexity perspectives—including autopoiesis and self-organising relational processes (Maturana; Stacey), as well as field-based understandings of systems operating far from equilibrium—it explores how pre-symbolic, affectively encoded experience may gradually acquire symbolic articulation.

Contemporary neuroscientific approaches to embodied resonance, mirror systems, and implicit relational processing provide a neurophysiological grounding for pre-reflective relational life. Mirroring is thus approached as a field-level process of pre-symbolic recognition of similarity and relational attunement, associated with the detection of safety or threat and expressed through affective and bodily states. From this implicit level, experience may later become symbolised, articulated in language, and integrated into reflective meaning-making.

When containment within the group matrix proves insufficient, negative mirroring may emerge—not necessarily as explicit rejection, but as distortion, attenuation, or absence of recognition. Such conditions may mobilize defensive configurations within the system, including silencing, appeals to undifferentiated equality, or the activation of a *Pharmakós* function.

A vignette from a group analytic training context illustrates these dynamics. A trainee with substantial prior therapeutic experience proposed differentiation regarding mandatory psychotherapy requirements; the proposal was institutionally declined and subsequently intensified following a failed therapeutic experience under conditions of compliance. While the symbolic law remained formally intact, an intervention functioning as containment helped prevent the consolidation of sacrificial dynamics. Tension later re-emerged horizontally among peers, where concerns about equality were voiced.

Understanding institutional responses as defensive attempts to preserve systemic coherence does not negate their potentially traumatic impact. Symbolic articulation and mentalising processes allow for psychic metabolisation of institutional experience. Integrating individual history within the social and transgenerational matrix enables negative mirroring to shift toward reflective processing, mourning, and creative continuity.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dimitrios Tachmatzidis (Greece)

"Two Truths and a Lie": The Large Group as Transitional Space and Pharmakós in a Group Analytic Training Programme

This paper presents a group analytic analysis of the first Large Group session (22 participants, November 2025) within the introductory postgraduate training programme of the Hellenic Network of Group Analysts (EDOA). The session was conducted online via Zoom and employed a structured icebreaker — "Two Truths and a Lie" — as its central organising activity.

Drawing on Foulkes's concepts of the foundation matrix, the dynamic matrix, and the four communication domains (current, transference, projective, primordial), the paper explores how this apparently playful structure simultaneously concealed and revealed the group's collective unconscious processes. Far from being a neutral warm-up exercise, the game functioned as a Winnicottian transitional space — an intermediate territory where truth and fiction, disclosure and concealment, became indistinguishable.

This paradox resonates powerfully with the Symposium's central metaphor of Pharmakós: the game itself operated as remedy and poison simultaneously. It enabled the group to move from initial paralysing silence towards emergent cohesion, while also functioning as a collective defence against deeper coherence. Members disclosed through indirection: stories of exploding kitchens, suspicious suitcases, plants murdered rather than neglected, and symbolic deaths — all carried projective and primordial material under the protective cover of play.

The analysis further addresses Dalal's reading of Elias to examine how power circulated through the game's structure, and how the social unconscious manifested through recurring resonance themes: animals and care, islands and exclusion, multilingualism and cultural identity. The group's island discourse — evoking closed communities, difficult integration, and belonging — functioned as a metaphor for the Large Group itself: a space that can isolate as much as it heals.

The paper argues that the Large Group, precisely because it mirrors society's negative dynamics — anonymity, anxiety, projection — carries within it the transformative potential of Pharmakós: from passive observer to active site of tradition, creativity, and renewal.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Mark Morbe (Italy)

At the Edge of the Group: Reflections on Social Withdrawal and Group Analysis

The present paper seeks to explore the current validity of the assumption underlying group-analytic metapsychology: according to group analysis, human beings, as social animals, may find in the group a possibility to repair the effects of internalized pathological relationships. On this basis, it becomes legitimate to question whether group therapy is also suitable for the clinical treatment of social withdrawal—namely for individuals who, shaped by the transformations introduced by the digital age, no longer perceive themselves as social beings and whose relational capacities appear significantly reduced or compromised.

Social withdrawal is understood here as a multidimensional phenomenon characterised by heterogeneous forms of isolation. It can be regarded as an "umbrella term" encompassing an increasing range of solitary behaviours, such as spending excessive time alone, avoiding peer interactions, and experiencing high levels of social anxiety (Cerbara et al., 2025). Simultaneously, from a psychosocial perspective, it may be interpreted as an effect of the ongoing processes of digitalization that permeate the contemporary world and profoundly reshape the ways individuals relate to one another (Scognamiglio, Russo, Fumagalli, 2024).

After reviewing key contributions from contemporary group analysis relevant to the theme of withdrawal, the paper proposes a distinction among socially withdrawn patients along a gradient of "hybridization," identifying differing degrees of potential engagement within a group setting and discussing the clinical implications for group-analytic practice.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Eve-Marie Kimmerling (Ireland)

From Cast-Out Fragments to Creative Dialogue: The Role of the Group Analyst's Artistic Practice in Metabolising Pharmakos in the Group Matrix

Reflecting on the theme of the scapegoat who carries and is burdened with what the group cannot bear enables rich engagement with processes of expulsion, projection and transformation in analytic groups. This paper brings into dialogue key ideas from Foulkes, Bion, Alvarez, Milner and Nitsun to explore how cast-out fragments of experience may be received and metabolised through the group analyst's artistic practice, illuminating the tripartite matrix and opening possibilities for transformation within the group's dynamic matrix.

This presentation outlines how my artistic practice functions as visual reverie. Through collage-making, juxtaposed fragments of image, text and paper become symbolic representations of group communications. This "collage reverie" offers a way of holding and transforming paradoxical elements of group life that might otherwise remain un-symbolised, creating space in which affect can be thought about rather than expelled.

The presentation is scaffolded by several key concepts. From a Bionian perspective, the pharmakos may be understood as the embodiment of beta elements—raw, unmentalised affect evacuated from the group in search of containment. Alvarez's notion of the "undrawn" deepens this understanding by highlighting aspects of psychic life that have not yet achieved symbolic form. Within Foulkes' group matrix, such expulsions are expressions of the shared unconscious field rather than isolated phenomena. Nitsun's concept of the "artist's matrix" extends this field into the visual realm, suggesting that images can function as communal sites of projection and dialogue. Milner's reflections on art as disciplined attentiveness to inner life further illuminate how creative practice fosters symbol formation and emotional integration.

I will present collages I have made and link them to my clinical work, illustrating how the development of my visual practice has deepened my capacity, as conductor, to work within the group matrix so that 'poisonous' cast out fragments may be taken up, thought about, and transformed into creative dialogue.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Marina Mojovic (Serbia)

Reparative Grandmothering as Pharmakos – Bridging Psychoanalytic and Group Analytic Fields

This is the third „sister's paper“ related to the concept of reparative grandmothering (continuation after GASi Symposium Berlin and Belgrade). This time it is inspired by a poem about the grandmother gogo from Zimbabwe, written by our colleague, her granddaughter, M.J. Maler for presentation in the UK on the „Role of the Grandmothers“ (shared also in GASi Winter Workshop 2026 in Pescara). Gogo made M.J. wish once to become a grandmother - today she is doing various significant professional and family reparative work, as well as teaching group analysis in Ruanda.

Group analysis is finding interesting new places of planting and fruition, but in other places, suffering from difficult circumstances - group analytic maps present us with unpredictable destinies. Since their conceptions, our psychoanalytic and group analytic fields, sub-disciplines, and their institutions have created family(s) with complex relationality. Among others, Oedipal relations, sibling rivalries (Hopper, 2022) with ruptures and reparations, are manifested in the tripartite matrices of our training and other institutions, both local and international. „Mothering“ of the group matrix with „fathering“ of the conductor might be joined with „grandparenting of koinonia“ conceptualization as a space, not only for nurturing median and large groups, but also for inter-group, inter-organizational, and inter-field dialoguing.

When in GASi Symposium London and Berlin, a median group of senior colleagues co-created workshops' series named „Keeping the Group-Analytic Flame Burning despite the Destructive Forces from the Context“, we hadn't imagined this level of their seriousness, as we are currently facing in our world(s). Miraculousness of our tripartite matrices to serve as positive pharmakos transformers allows us to keep learning to listen to the whispers from the depth of humanity's wisdom, that gogo's and our others' reparative grandmothering may help us.

Vignettes from examples will be offered.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Indhu Rajagopalan (India)

Social Media as Digital Pharmakós: The Perpetual Online Large Group

Contemporary life is increasingly lived within social media environments that function not merely as communication technologies but as pervasive relational fields shaping psychic and social experience. With the promise of connection, recognition, and belonging, social media has become a central space of everyday life while simultaneously commodifying experience and subjecting users to continuous evaluation. This paper proposes that social media increasingly assumes the function of a digital pharmakós, reenacting the ancient ritual figure understood as both poison and cure.

Social media is also seen as a perpetual digital large-group matrix: a shared psychic space in which individuals are continuously exposed to one another without containing structures necessary for reflective dialogue. Unlike therapeutic large groups, this matrix is algorithmically organised, and largely uncontained, intensifying processes of splitting, projection, and malignant mirroring as users encounter amplified reflections of self and other. Social media thus functions both as a medium through which collective anxieties circulate and as the space in which individuals become objects of those projections. In contrast, de Maré's concept of koinonia describes how large groups become creative cultural spaces only when dialogue slows aggression and allows meaning to emerge. Social media accelerates interaction precisely where containment and temporal slowing are required for transformation.

The digital large group becomes a site of psychic injury and a potential space for communal meaning-making. This raises critical questions about the psychological consequences of perpetual visibility and belonging: What happens to the individual psyche when the large group becomes continuous rather than episodic? How does algorithmic mediation reshape the social and collective unconscious? By linking the myth of the pharmakós with contemporary digital life, the paper offers a group-analytic understanding of social media as a paradoxical cultural formation: one that simultaneously wounds and binds, fragments and connects, reflecting humanity's search for recognition within ever-expanding collective existence.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Megha Dhiman (India)

Polarisations in groups - Role of unacknowledged Envy

Groups often get pulled into two extreme poles/positions, where members align rigidly with one side or the other. In these situations, often dialogue breaks down. There is difficulty in asking questions, being open; only a unidirectional and rigid form of thinking is accessible. The group becomes stuck in this knot, unable to move, resolve, or work productively. One side cannot hear or see the other, and positions become fixed. Splitting, scapegoating, and cancel culture takes dominance in the group process. In this paper I wish to use the Kleinian understanding of paranoid Schizoid position, splitting of the good and bad object, Projections and envy to explore the phenomenon of polarization in groups. I will be exploring group phenomena such as Malignant mirroring, Anti-group and Envy Pre-emption. As much as it speaks to my own life experiences where I have found myself being in the position of inviting envy and difficult projections; I have also seen this play out in the analytic groups I have been a part of and groups that I have run. It seems quite relevant in the times of extreme ideologies and truths being imposed; people being pushed to take sides. It's been a theme present in the larger politics of India, global politics and wars and the conflicts in GAI Community. Does this polarization become a tool to process our personal histories? What is being mirrored? Who pays the price in the split? How does group analysis help? Or doesn't help?

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Donatella Lanave (Italy)

The two-sided medal: an epistemological synthesis of the Pharmaks Process, from hyletic pain to the healing of re-signification

Epistemological Introduction

The inquiry is rooted in the semantic ambivalence of the Greek term *pharmakòs*, an intrinsically dual figure representing the simultaneity of "poison" and "cure". This structural duality constitutes the core responsibility of professional intervention within the group-analytic domain, articulated through the metaphor of the two-sided medal.

The Dimension of Hyletic Pain

The primary side of this medal is represented by hyletic pain. This term, of Husserlian derivation (*hyle*, matter), is integrated into the scientific and clinical lexicon of Alberto Patella. It does not constitute a reflection of the patient's suffering; rather, it is an unconscious, transpersonal, and multipersonal dimension that exclusively involves the professional. Such suffering emerges as a consequence of the collusive climate and the state of opposition between the various instances of the professional's mind.

Methodology: Anatepmporal Deferment

The clinical management of hyletic pain finds its methodological cornerstone in the instrument of Anatepmporal Deferment (Patella, 1980-1984). Within the group-analytic Context/Matrix, deferment enacts a suspension of space and time that allows the group analyst to experience a "direct lack of control". This process valorizes the *genius temporis* of the setting and facilitates de-collusion in the "*hic et nunc*".

Discussion: The Turning of the Medal

The medal turns, and the transition from "poison" to "remedy" occurs through language, which is rooted in the clinical situation not as logical discourse, but as a bond (*legame*) (Giordano, 2013). Within a rigorously instituted context, language becomes the level from which the "new chain of significations" unfolds, prioritizing the symbolic weight of the spoken word.

Conclusions and Re-signification

The medal facilitates healing when the absolute power of interpretation yields to a process of re-signification within the group matrix. The "care" process is entrusted to the clinician's ability to "translate" and render communicable the unconscious significations conveyed through contextual communication processes, allowing the two faces to coexist and inhabit the same medal.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Danilo Pešić (Serbia)

with Jasmina Stojkovic Pavlovic

Group Analytic Approach to School Shooting Trauma in Serbia: Working Within the Tripartite Matrix

Recent meta-analyses support the efficacy of group approaches to trauma in children and adolescents, yet group analytic and psychodynamic clinical accounts remain underrepresented. This paper presents a group analytic intervention with the classroom most directly affected by the first school shooting in Serbian history — carried out on May 3, 2023, by a 13-year-old student who killed nine classmates and a security guard and injured six others.

therapists worked with the directly affected classroom in a tapered setting: twice weekly, weekly, biweekly, and monthly — with an intensification phase before the new school year of twice daily sessions over seven days and an individual interview with each student. The group analytic stance was maintained throughout with necessary modifications: drawing on large paper, food and beverages at the start of treatment, grounding techniques for regulating group anxiety during moments of intense affect and dissociation, and regular contact with parents. The work with this classroom was part of a broader systemic intervention.

Supervision was the central organising space: gathering clinical data, processing vicarious traumatisation, maintaining the analytic stance, and coordinating interventions across all levels of the tripartite matrix — foundation, dynamic, and personal. This concept enabled understanding of work group functioning, basic assumption processes, and the oscillation between aggregation and massification observable from the classroom through the institution to the societal response. Three years after the event, none of the students from the directly affected classroom exhibited symptoms of PTSD.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Teresa Mason (Ireland)

The Pharmakos ritual and the drive to cast out : Jung on the ‘shadow’ and Kristeva’s theory of ‘abjection’ as aids to understanding the phenomena in group analytic practice.

The group analytic perspective is unique in psychotherapy for its cognisance of the importance of the social context for the individual. In group analysis or in individual therapeutic work through the group analytic lens, attention is directed to the quality and texture of group relationships at the current time and at key times in the development of the person. The Pharmakos ritual in ancient Greece was enacted in an attempt to address the community’s problems by driving a selected person or persons outside the city boundary, effectively finding a scapegoat. Our capacity as a species to project the unwanted, the ‘shadow’ aspects of ourselves and the groups we belong to onto other individuals and groups is discomfortingly apparent and depressingly familiar. In a similar vein, an experience or knowledge of one’s own ‘otherness’ can lend a vitality to how we engage with those that we encounter. Analytical psychologist Carl Jung’s work on the archetype of the shadow is a familiar theoretical concept for many, which merits review in terms of the theme of this symposium. Less well known, philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection presents group analysts with a considered understanding of what it is we find most shameful or objectionable and how we might try to distance ourselves from experiencing it. This presentation will involve an overview of these theoretical contributions and how they potentially weave into group analytic writing and thinking on projection, exclusion, and othering. Through visual images and towards encouraging a softening of rigid binaries, the presentation will involve the consideration of the healing potential of attending to what has been cast out into the margins.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Ana Živanović (Slovenia)

Supervisory group and online women group as sources of continuity in the migrations: from negative mirroring to enhancing group analyst's identity

In period marked by social fragmentation, migration, war, pandemics and political polarization, the negative mirroring is the group process in which groups encounter themselves reflected back through distortion, projection, exclusion or scapegoating.

Duality of the destruction and renewal, regression and innovation, exclusion and belonging is not merely a symptom of crisis but an inherent structural condition of human coexistence. However, the tripartite matrix indicates that crisis is always multilayered. What may seem as an individual conflict may be an echo of social unconscious.

In this paper, I will explore how the support of the group-analytic learning community, which provided me with the possibility to supervise homogenous online women group, became a transition, and in parallel transformatory, space for the therapist. The group became the constant, in a period of therapist reallocation from one town to another, thus providing support to maintaining and empowering of a developing professional identity of a group analyst. The supervised online women group, became a stable matrix in which the space related migrations are not felt as a loss, but as potential for development. It became a symbol for integration.

In this paper I will show how one group member took on the role of pharmacos, as the bearer of rivalry projections, as well as expulsion in the wider social context. In parallel, the other member took on the role of pharmacos as bearer of aggressive pulsions within the group. Finally, I will describe the process of group psychotherapist's struggle not to become scapegoated, while being in her own process of migration.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Branka Bakic (Serbia)

Student Protests in Serbia: An Attempt to Transcend Incohesion?

This paper is proposed in the memory of my last conversation with Earl Hopper, in Belgrade in October 2025, where he presented his Incohesion Theory. On the margins of the event we spoke about the ongoing student protests in Belgrade and entire country, and how I observed in vivo the playing out of his theory. He encouraged me to write about it, and I promised I would. So, I keep my promise.

In this paper I will present my understanding of the current social and political crisis in Serbia, from the group analytic point of view. The crisis was ignited by the fall of canopy at the rail station that killed 16 people in Novi Sad in late 2024. The students began the mourning process by commemorating the victims by going out of their faculties for 16 minutes of silence in the streets. The ruling regime sent their membership, as pseudo-citizens, to stir up physical conflict with students for propaganda purposes. A number of students were hurt in this first conflict. Initially, the students reacted by blocking themselves in faculty buildings, in aggregate encapsulations or social psychic retreats. Then, they organized themselves in the so-called 'plenums', a very specific form of large group meetings, and initiated the long process of fierce demand for political accountability that lasts until today.

The paper will describe how the outcry of young people of Serbia to mourn, following the latest blow to social leaking container, was met with the massification forces and retaliation of the regime. The paper will also offer illustrations of personifications of incohesion theory. Additionally, it will provide examples of the emergence of figurations from the social unconscious during many almost daily protests, which will be explored also through the lenses of field theory.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Sheila Ritchie (United Kingdom)

Mother as Pharmakós? Gaia, Rhea, Demeter, or Medea? Who mirrors whom in navigating maternal ambivalence?

Greek goddesses and mythological figures associated with motherhood give good examples of maternal ambivalence. Gaia - Mother Earth but vengeful; Rhea - Mother of the Gods, determined to protect Zeus from the wrath and envy of her husband Chronos; Demeter - raped by Zeus, mother of Persephone who was doomed to spend 6 months of the year in the underworld; and Medea who kills her own children out of revenge for her husband's infidelity.

Through video material taken from a group analytic mother and baby group in the context of a Perinatal Parent Infant Mental Health Service in the UK, we will consider different representations of motherhood and how change can happen in the context of the mirroring processes in a mother and baby group.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Prakriti Pandia (India)

The Group as Pharmakós (Visha and Amrita): Negative Mirroring, the Margin, and the Healing Capacity of the Large Group in Training

I come to the large group carrying the Indian joint family before I carry any theory about it. Its multigenerational density, unspoken hierarchies, caste-inflected silences, and ancestral residues are not background but lived knowledge of how collective life metabolises — or expels—what it cannot yet bear. The joint family is itself a large group: a social microcosm negotiating what may be centered and what must remain at the periphery (Foulkes, 1964; Kakar, 1981). What cannot be spoken does not disappear; it circulates, often undigested, shaping the emotional field.

The figure of the Pharmakós—simultaneously remedy and poison—offers a lens for understanding negative mirroring in the large group. Within Ayurvedic thought, visha (poison) and amrita (immortal nectar) are not fixed opposites but points on a continuum: what harms in one context may heal in another, depending on containment and reception. Negative mirroring operates in this same paradoxical register. The member, theme, or silence that becomes marginalised often carries precisely what the group cannot yet think. Expelled, it becomes toxic; received, it becomes transformative.

Drawing on Bion's (1961) notion of beta elements and Bollas's (1987) 'unthought known', I propose that phenomena arising in the large group, the shared dream, the fragment of poetry, the prolonged silence, the meaningful absence, function as repositories of collective undigested experience. These are not incidental occurrences but communications from the social unconscious (Hopper, 2003). The margin operates as psychic storage: a holding place for what resists symbolisation (Turquet, 1975). Silence condenses unprocessed anxiety; absence shapes the matrix as powerfully as presence.

Group-analytic training provides a crucible for working with this dynamic. The task is not to eliminate negative mirroring but to cultivate the capacity to sit with the undigested, to hear the dream as group property, to tolerate silence without premature interpretation,

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Ana Lina Vodusek (Slovenia)

Applied group-analytic reflective groups in Palliative care teams in Slovenia

In this paper, I present my personal experience of facilitating applied group-analytic reflective groups with members of palliative care teams in Slovenia. The meetings were held via the Zoom platform over two years once monthly. The group work applying group analytic principles was designed to create a space for shared reflection, emotional support, and professional empowerment of professionals working in the challenging conditions, where there is little support for the carers that face death all the time.

The participants were predominantly physicians, leaders of palliative care teams, who in many cases were also the initiators of establishing these teams within their healthcare institutions.

The topics addressed included personal dilemmas, emotional challenges in working with severely ill patients and their families, as well as everyday organizational difficulties.

The psychodynamic approach enabled a deeper understanding of unconscious team dynamics, emotional pressures, and defence mechanisms present in everyday practice. The topic of death being as pharmakos, at the same time poisonous, disabling the members to really connect personally, using also negative mirroring as a defence mechanism and at same time healing in a way they could share the stories. Through shared reflection, participants developed a sense of mutual support, professional recognition, and greater resilience to stress and emotional exhaustion.

It is particularly significant that the participants, especially those in leadership roles, emphasized that the group support helped them better tolerate anxiety and uncertainty in their work with patients, colleagues, and institutions. At the same time, they felt empowered to provide greater support to members of their own teams.

As the facilitator of these groups, I believe that such reflective spaces play a key role in strengthening supportive leadership, mutual connectedness, and professional resilience in the emotionally intense and complex context of palliative care.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Ana Lina Vodusek (Slovenia)

with Dragana Dragojevic

Hybrid Large Group-Analytic Group as pharmakos

The large group-analytic group (LG) represents a particular process of learning and of helping oneself and others within and through the group, where we can observe socio-cultural contexts and patterns.

The experience of the large group enables us to become more skilful and freer in communication, and to approach our professional and civic roles within communities, teams, and society with less anxiety. In our contemporary era, LG are becoming increasingly important, where the hybrid model allows us to reach a wider population.

A good example is the regularly monthly Belgrade LG that was founded and co-conducted from 2015 by group analysts Marina Mojović and Jelica Satarić. Since 2022 the group has functioned in a hybrid format and from 2025 is part of School for Integrative Group Analysis Koinonia-Art as tripartite model of training program for LG conductors. It is currently co-conducted by Marina Mojović, Branka Bakić, Ana Lina Vodusek and Dragana Dragojević.

The hybrid model has shown us that meaningful connection is possible even through screens with part of the group being in person. This form of participation creates a qualitatively different experience, one that has not yet been sufficiently explored.

How to remain present with the whole group is a challenge for conducting online. One must rely on different sensory channels; the body is partially absent, while listening becomes intensified.

The online position can function as pharmakos — both remedy and poison —simultaneously connected and disconnected. Absorbing the group's unprocessed emotions, unable to see or physically sense the participants, we can fall in love or in negative mirroring. With greater proactivity in sharing thoughts, we can escape dissociated "bubbles, while different quality of listening allow access to the unconscious of the group and can transform the negative mirror into a reflective and creative one.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Dr. Ole Karkov Østergård (Denmark)

with Dr. Martin Luedemann, Dr. med. Alexander Niecke, Dr. med. Silke Pless, Dr. Claudia Oberbracht

From Individual to Group: Describing the Development of Common Themes and Level of Integration in Groups

This paper presents the Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis for Groups (OPD-G) as a framework for understanding group processes. The framework combines the OPD, originally developed for individual assessment and therapy planning in Germany, with key concepts from group analysis. Our goal is to provide a conceptual framework for describing what occurs within groups by showing how individual conflicts and motivational systems are externalized and manifested in groups, emerging into common themes.

To achieve this, we draw from the thematic content and social origins of inner conflicts outlined in the OPD and connect these to group-specific concepts from notable theorists such as Foulkes (personification and group-specific factors), Bion (basic assumptions and work group), and Schlapobersky (resonance, valence, condensation, and amplification).

We describe seven common themes present in groups: dependence versus individuation, submission versus control, care versus self-sufficiency, self-worth, guilt, oedipal, and identity. Each of these themes can be described across four levels of integration or functioning: high (“task group”), moderate (“grumbling group”), low (“tumult group”), and disintegrated (“confusion group”).

The high level of integration is characterized by benign mirroring, realistic perception allowing co-existences of individual differences, good impulse and boundary regulation, open and spontaneous communication, cohesion, and an ability to welcome and bid farewell to group members, including the experiences of sadness and gratitude. In contrast, the lower to disintegrated levels exhibit features commonly associated with basic assumption groups, such as malign mirroring, attacks on linking, dysregulation, annihilation anxiety, and a lack of cohesion.

At this symposium, we are presenting OPD-G for the first time internationally, with the aim of investigating its reliability, validity, and clinical utility in the near future. Ultimately, the OPD-G framework aspires to provide a comprehensive understanding of group dynamics and functioning that can be used in clinical settings, for supervision, and for research into group processes.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Ye Yue (Italy / China)

The Restless Red Horse: The Migrant Candidate as an Emotional Pharmakós

In the shadow of a new global fragmentation—echoing the Peloponnesian War—I entered a UK Group Analytic training as its first Chinese candidate. This coincided with the Chinese year of the "Red Horse" (Bing Wu), a symbol of fire energy, radical upheaval, and power transition.

Drawing on my experience of bridging East and West, this paper explores how the migrant candidate becomes the institution's Emotional Pharmakós. My transnational digital practice—holding a Chinese registration license, residing in Italy, and training in the UK—clashed violently with the host institution's "Spartan" adherence to rigid boundaries. This manifested in local licensure traditions, the tight binding of insurance to medical frameworks, and a deep-seated resistance to online therapy. To this system, my mobility was a "poison," threatening the safety of the established frame. I became the "Restless Red Horse," carrying an affective intensity that the British matrix, permeated by Whiteness, struggled to contain.

Bearing the trauma of silence from the depths of Chinese power structures and history, I was initially prone to voicelessness. However, in my struggle to secure a place within this system—bolstered by peer support yet constantly battling established rules—as I began to find my voice, the Group Matrix projected the role of "Rebel" onto me. This "Negative Mirroring" became a turning point. By reclaiming the "Red Horse" energy—the aggression and destructiveness inherent in innovation—I transformed from a passive container of projections into an active agent of change.

I contend that without the courage to challenge boundaries and break rules, no genuine transformation is possible. Dynamic Administration acts as a Symposium negotiating the tension between Tradition's safety and Innovation's fire. The group's capacity to metabolize the "poison" of the migrant's difference is the ultimate "remedy." This proves that the Restless Red Horse, while destructive to the old order, is precisely the vital carrier of Group Analysis's future.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Konstantinos Giannakopoulos (Greece)

Transforming organizational trauma after employee suicide. The group as Pharmakós in the reparative process of organizational thinking.

This paper reflects on the implementation of a group-analytic intervention in a workplace following the suicide of an employee. Drawing on W. Bion's theory of group dynamics, Earl Hopper's concepts of collective trauma and incohesion, S. H. Foulkes' notion of the foundation matrix, and Isabel Menzies Lyth's systems-psychodynamic understanding of organizational defenses, the paper explores how an individual traumatic event becomes inscribed in the organizational foundation matrix. It further examines how the group may function as a Pharmakós—simultaneously containing the toxic aspects of the trauma while enabling their transformation into shared meaning.

Although the suicide occurred outside the workplace, it profoundly disrupted relational bonds among employees and destabilized basic trust in the containing environment. The sudden and shocking event raised unsettling questions: "How well did we know Mr. X? How well do we know one another?" It revealed the collapse of a shared unconscious phantasy of mutual protection between the group and the organization. Intense feelings of guilt oscillated with annihilation anxieties, exposing strains in the leadership's holding and containing capacities.

Both the group and its leadership initially struggled to elaborate and symbolize the traumatic event. This difficulty manifested in proposals to "brick up Mr. X's office" or "transform it into a corridor," suggesting attempts at magical erasure and pointing to a "negative encapsulation" of the trauma.

Organizational trauma is here conceived as a collapse of social defenses against annihilation anxiety and an impairment of the alpha function. Within this context, the group-analytic intervention operated as a Pharmakós, enabling the gradual processing and symbolization of the traumatic experience. The transformation of organizational trauma toward a more mature and inclusive foundation matrix becomes possible when the trauma is sufficiently processed and integrated into a renewed structure of meaning—what may be described as the «reparative process of organizational thinking».

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Yasmin Paul (India)

Before the Pharmakós: Ambivalence, Hesitation, and the Threshold of Scapegoating

This paper explores ambivalence and hesitation as central features of group analytic life rather than symptoms of pathology or resistance. Through the lens of the pharmakós—the figure who comes to embody and carry a group's contradictions during moments of collective crisis—it asks what happens before a group produces its scapegoat. Rather than beginning with sacrifice or expulsion, the paper turns to the threshold where uncertainty, belonging, and difference are still being negotiated.

Drawing on psychoanalytic and group analytic theory alongside postcolonial and caste-critical perspectives, the paper examines how ambivalence emerges at the intersection of individual subjectivity and the social unconscious structured by power, hierarchy, and difference. Building on Freud's formulation of ambivalence and Girindrasekhar Bose's concept of "opposing conscious wishes," hesitation is reframed not as resistance but as the lived experience of negotiating the competing demands of belonging, recognition, and self-preservation within the group matrix.

Contemporary group analytic contributions, including Foulkes, Dalal, Hopper, Kent, and Aiyegbusi, illuminate how processes of belonging, projection, mirroring, and scapegoating gradually organise uncertainty around particular members. Rather than treating the pharmakós as a fixed figure, the paper considers the group processes through which contradiction increasingly comes to rest in a single body.

A clinical vignette from a long-term training group illustrates how naming hesitation transformed conflict from an individual problem into a shared group phenomenon. Extending this discussion through examples drawn from caste, class, gender, and political life, the paper argues that hesitation is not merely an individual psychological phenomenon but relational information about a group's diminishing capacity to bear contradiction. Recognising these threshold experiences invites a reconsideration of the pharmakós as a process that begins before the moment of sacrifice, while contradiction remains collectively held rather than individually embodied.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Mats Bjerke (Norway)

Favourites in the group. On favouring some over others, and the wish to be favoured oneself, in a long-term psychodynamic group.

This paper examines the phenomenon of favouring — and wishing to be favoured — as it emerges among members and between members and the therapist in a long-term psychodynamic group.

The Norwegian verb "å like" does not translate perfectly into "to like" in English, but it points to something most of us recognise: what makes us, as conductors, group members, and people in general, drawn to some and not others — and how these preferences may shape our actions and the group dynamics around us. I am not then referring to favouritism as behaviour, but as a mental phenomenon, one that involves more facets than projection, transference, and counter-transference alone. From the literature I have reviewed, favouritism in this sense appears somewhat underexplored in group analytic writing.

Drawing on clinical material from my own therapy group, I explore how favouritism seems to form, and how these dynamics, when unexamined, can contribute to scapegoating, acting out, and — in my particular group — problems with intimacy and vulnerability. Scapegoating processes seem to be reinforced both by being especially unfavoured or favoured by the conductor, resembling how the teacher's pet might cause jealousy.

Counter-transference, with its often intertwined subjective and objective dimensions, is treated as important information rather than unwanted noise. Yet, it does not always feel productive to notice that one thinks of group members — and at times the group-as-a-whole — as boring, lazy, stupid, overachieving, spineless, nagging, thin-skinned, know-it-all, absent-minded, monotonous, predictable and unfeeling, while viewing others as charming, funny, insightful, courageous, surprising, beautiful, and heroic. Still, being aware of these evaluations, talking about them in supervision and finding ways to address some of them in the group can be helpful and freeing in many ways.

This paper is currently being completed as a qualification thesis as a group analyst for IGA Norway.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Anna Zett (Germany)

Postsocialist Group Improvisation – a performative and transformative art practice rooted in group analysis

This talk discusses a performative art practice inspired by group analysis, in particular a specific collaborative project titled Postsocialist Group Improvisation. From 2020-2022 I initiated and co-lead a process of structured experimentation to develop an embodied assembly format, in collaboration with the dancer and choreographer Hermann Heisig and supported by the Berlin Grant Program for Artistic Research. This work was motivated and grounded by a specific historical interest: as East Germans born in the 1980's we wished to soften the ideologically over-coded memory of the Former East, uncover some of the traces this collectivist and authoritarian state left in our bodies, and open a space for new imaginations, associations and group experience. A so called "Resonance Assembly" is a workshop-like format introduced by a warm-up and closed by a monological reflection-round recorded on audio. The core format includes verbal and non-verbal communication, drawing, music and light, framed by a 25m2 playing field with 4 specific chairs as active playing positions. Certain rules for vocal or physical intervention allow everyone to spontaneously enter a conversation between Question and Story, or end it in favor of non-verbal interaction. Within the performative arts this type of work is called (improvisation) score – an artist sets a simple set of behavioral rules that limit everyone's freedom within a certain spatiotemporal frame yet don't prescribe anything to happen in particular. Once the score has started, no one is in a directing role anymore, and the group enters a process of self-organisation or instant composition. For the core group of Postsocialist Group Improvisation as well for some one-time participants this practice seems to have had a transformative, healing effect. Yet how to balance body and language in group improvisation scores, remains an active research question in my art practice.

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Anna Zett is an artist, writer and group analyst in training.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Dor Roitman (Israel)

Group Interventions in Field Rations - Targeted group interventions after the October 7th attack

The October 7th attack and its aftermath can be seen as a collective trauma that echoes other traumas, in Jewish history and elsewhere, and which powerfully activates a 'soldiers' matrix' in Israeli society. I will present the view of a wounded society embedded in a Soldier's Matrix and re-experiencing Chosen Traumas.

The Israeli Association of Group Psychotherapy (IAGP) mobilized to help populations in need, by coordinating and carrying out short-term group interventions at the locations to where refugees from devastated areas were sent for temporary housing. The work of the intervention team and the facilitators who took part in the project will be presented, alongside a few examples from the interventions that took place.

This is given from a personal point of view, through the presenter's experience as the head of the intervention team.

While carrying out these interventions, we met unfamiliar situations that required immediate decisions, 'on the fly'. Some of these decisions diverged from our professional convictions and guiding principles as group facilitators.

The lecture touches on the challenge of providing group therapy in 'field rations'. Field Rations are prepackaged military rations designed to be easily and quickly prepared and consumed in the field, in combat situations.

It will address two main points: (1) The need to carry out group interventions 'in field conditions' while the war continues to wage on and the wounds of the trauma are still fresh, and (2) The challenge of providing short group interventions to organic groups, in an unorthodox setting (single sessions, or up to four sessions).

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dor Roitman (Israel)

The horse as Pharmakos - Equine Assisted Group Psychotherapy for soldiers with PTSD

Since October 2023, Israel is in a state of war. Cases of soldiers experiencing physical and emotional injuries, including PTSD symptoms, are multiplying. Group work has emerged as the treatment of choice in the Defense Ministry Rehabilitation Department, and in many other institutions. New experimental Group Therapy Programs are being deployed.

The integration of group work with outdoor experiential activities has proven to be very effective. One such project will be presented, where group therapy is combined with the treatment of horses with difficulties.

This project is taking place in a designated compound within a veterinary hospital. Several horses suffering from various health problems (physical and emotional, some man-made) were handpicked to participate. The group meetings comprise group work and outdoor time, grooming and medically treating the horses.

In Greek Mythology, the winged horse Pegasus was born from the severed head of the Gorgon Medusa and became Bellerophon's companion in slaying the monster Chimera, eventually to end in the stables of Olympus carrying Zeus' lightnings unto the world. In this project, treating sick and wounded horses while nurturing an emotional bond with them is part of the healing process. Another factor is the horses' social life, reflected in the unveiling of their own group (herd) dynamics and used to aid the exploration of the unfolding dynamics of the participants' group.

Several aspects will be discussed, namely: Setting, staff and methods. We will focus on the social and interpersonal aspects of the work with the horses, and their ramifications.

Major themes will be highlighted and explored, including:

1. Dealing with problems of compliance, avoidance and emotional dysregulation.
2. Treating individual disorders in adjustment and interpersonal skills.
3. Processing traumatic experiences and treating traumatic symptoms.
4. Generating post-traumatic growth and the regeneration of vitality and sociality.

The discussion will be accompanied by case studies and visual illustrations.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Francesca Livia Antonietta Genna (Italy)

with Beatrice Baroni

A Presence in the Silence: the Conductor–Observer Device as Pharmakos in Contemporary Clinical Practice

In contemporary clinical practice, patients who have experienced emotional neglect may perceive the silence of the other as an experience of absence (Winnicott, 1965). Within group-analytic settings, silence therefore requires reconsideration beyond its traditional interpretation as resistance.

Drawing on two illustrative cases, Lucas and Sandra, we explore silence as a phenomenon with a dual function: protection of the self and re-enactment of early traumatic experience. In Lucas's group, silence initially evoked intense anxiety rooted in war-related trauma. Over time, it became a symbolic and thinkable space for working-through, held by the embodied presence of the silent observer. In Sandra's group, by contrast, silence was interpreted solely as resistance and its protective function remained unexplored, contributing to premature dropout.

This comparison highlights a clinically crucial variable: the presence of the silent observer. Interviews with conductors and observers suggest that this dynamic extends beyond individual cases and may be observed across wider group-analytic contexts.

Within the group matrix, the silent observer symbolises the group memory and supports introspection, attunement, and the containment of archaic elements such as projections, identifications, and persecutory nuclei. As part of the conductor–observer device (Chiodi & Di Fratta, 2009), the observer enables the matrix to experience absence within presence and presence within absence — within silence and in relation to an Other.

The observer's embodied, visible, and non-intrusive presence fosters transformative experiences in clinical contexts where the symbolised Other represents a therapeutic aim rather than an original foundation. In this sense, embodied silence functions as Pharmakos: simultaneously a site of early wounding and a space for elaboration within the group field.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Thalia Valeta (Greece)

"Metamyth"(C)/Dramatherapy through the Arts with Elements of Group Analytic Psychotherapy for people with Eating Disorders

“Metamyth”© /Dramatherapy with Elements of Group Analytic Psychotherapy for People with Eating Disorders.

by Thalia Valeta BA ,MA, HPC reg UK.

In this presentation I will talk about my experience of how ‘Metamyth’(C)/Dramatherapy by Thalia Valeta affiliated with some elements, as tools, from Group Analytic Psychotherapy by S.H. Foulkes,

has contributed in the Psychological treatment of people with Eating Disorders.

'Metamyth'©/Dramatherapy is a unique Dramatherapy approach founded by Thalia Valeta Psychotherapist , Dramatherapist , Actress and Writer. It is a psychological method that makes use of all the arts and draws from the historic use of the connection of the Arts, Mythology and Healing. “Metamyth”© is psychoanalytically oriented and can be practiced in individual therapy and in groups, in hospitals, schools or cultural spaces , like Museums, with the name, Metamyth Therapy through the Arts in Museums ©.

As we all know S.H.Foulkes has been an experienced psychoanalyst and theoretician sensitive, open and eager to help humanity and who has conceived the type of group psychotherapy as we study it and combined it with his psychoanalytic training to make Group Analytic Psychotherapy.

After two years of conducting “Metamyth”© groups with people with eating disorder , in the 1st University Clinic in the University of Athens, Aeginition Hospital, I have noticed that in these ‘Metamyth’© sessions we have been using some of the practices of group analytic psychotherapy Naturally!

My interpretation of this is that the values of Group Analytic Psychotherapy as described by S.H.Foulkes have a pure , humanistic yet scientific way of approaching Group Psychotherapy , which complements ‘Metamyth’©/Dramatherapy through the Arts and its values and therapeutic principals .

Similarly I believe that “Metamyth”©Therapy through the Arts adds a new dimension to Group Analytic Psychotherapy where the Matrix in “Metamyth”© also extends into a cultural space.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

MJ Maher (United Kingdom)

A personal journey of a 'foreigner' group analyst, from trainee to trainer.

In my paper, I reflect on my experiences as a 'foreigner' clearly demonstrating Kurt Lewin's Field Theory that behaviour is a function of the person and their cultural environment $B=f(p, e)$ hence you can take a group analyst out of Zimbabwe but you can't take Zimbabwe out of the group analyst. I explore my journey from training to be a group analyst to qualifying, marrying my cultural background to the foreign society which perceived me 'the foreigner'. I analyse my successes and challenges in negotiating my position in the Institute of Group Analysis and in GASi.

I look at the Pharmakos myth, which like a mirror, reflects and reveals socio-political crisis and how these can be played out within GASi through exclusion, polarisation, stigmatization and social injustice.

I use Pharmakos as a person who, like a scapegoat carrying unwanted evils of a community, is ritually expelled or sacrificed to purify the community. I discuss how historical stereotypical beliefs are transmitted onto the tapestry of today's chosen scapegoats to keep Group Analytic community pure. I play with the idea of what happens when the scapegoat bites back - refusing to transport the disowned ugliness, instead it reflects them back to you?

I challenge you to stare into negative mirroring. Would you tolerate the disown evils or stone the goat? Or would you be curious and desire working together to find a different way of purifying without sacrificing - enriching GASi as a positive diverse community?

How can GASi facilitate the process of grappling with this prickly pear to extract the best out of its membership, breaking the tradition of scapegoating, shifting from a Group that triggers psychic injury to transforming the Group to become a messenger of change, creativity and innovation, a space for healing and growth?

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Evgen Kajin (Slovenia)

Basic assumptions – Bion's theory with Hopper's fourth stage and experience of BA group of fight-flight in one session of supervision group

In studying groups analysis, students sometimes learn some theoretical concepts even before they have encountered these concepts in clinical practice. When I and my fellow students were learning about basic assumptions, we found it difficult to reach a clear understanding of how these ideas would unfold in practice. Interestingly, several weeks after the concept of basic assumptions was presented in our study group, we had a »privilege of encountering a demonstration«: to encounter a ruling of one of the basic assumptions in our supervision group. In this paper, I will try to follow several authors in their descriptions of the Bion's original conceptualization about three basic assumptions in groups, namely basic assumptions of dependency, fight-flight and of pairing, with the addition of Hopper's fourth basic assumption of incohesion: aggregation/massification. I will continue with a vignette of one supervision session where, following several key events, the group process went from being mainly a working group through the regression into a basic assumption group of fight-flight and slowly back to the working group again. With this experience, I would like to follow the idea of Bion: "And yet, despite the fact that we are powerfully drawn to magical solutions (forms of non-thinking)", for Bion, groups (and individuals) are at their core "hopelessly committed to a developmental procedure" (Bion, 1959, p. 89), i.e., to thinking, to learning from experience, and to growing up. "This commitment reflects what Bion believes to be a need that is perhaps the most powerful of all human strivings: the need for truth." (Ogden, 2008, p. 15)

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

KONSTANTINOS KALLIGIANNIS (Greece)

with Natasa Karapostoli, Thalís Papadakis, Ioannis Tsegos

The Participation of the Conductor in the Psychodramatic Play

Group-Analytic Psychodrama is an original approach derived from the dynamic interaction between the psychodramatic procedure and the group-analytic principles. It was first applied in 1980 within the Psychotherapeutic Community of the Open Psychotherapy Centre (O.P.C.). According to this approach, two distinct processes occur within the group session: the group process and the stage action. Emphasis is placed on the link between them, which emerges through the continuous transition between the group as a whole (matrix) and the action on stage (reflecting the group matrix) (Papadakis, 1984; Tsegos, 2002).

One of the main differences between Group-Analytic Psychodrama and classical psychodrama, as well as its later developments, is the conductor's participation in the enactment, ie he plays himself. The conductor, as the most experienced member of the group (Foulkes & Anthony, 1964), beyond his own development in creativity and spontaneity (Moreno, 1934), primarily facilitates the group by demonstrating trust in the psychodramatic group process. Furthermore, the conductor's participation in the stage action strengthens authenticity and reduces authoritarian tendencies. In this way, a “laboratory” of relationships (verbal and bodily communication) is created, allowing the emergence of the “prosopon” of the conductor (face to face authentic relationships) within the group context (Tsegos, 2002).

This presentation explores the therapeutic impact of the conductor's participation in the stage, both on the therapist and on the group, drawing on theory and clinical experience from its application in psychotherapeutic communities and private practice from 1980 to the present (Tsegos, 2012).

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Anna Kalogera (Greece)

with Eli Mitroutsikou, Kyriaki Dimitrakopoulou, Ioannis Tsegos

The Therapeutic Communities of the Open Psychotherapeutic Center

The Therapeutic Community, from its very inception, bears a clear political imprint: it originates in and serves the community, arising from clinical needs rather than from any preconceived theoretical or ideological framework. The Psychotherapeutic Communities of the OPC (Daily, Fortnight, and Summer), as they have developed since 1980, constitute an original group-analytic therapeutic model consistent with a multifactorial approach to mental disorder. Rather than replicating imported models, they have been adapted to the Greek context. The incorporation of principles derived from the Greek communal tradition has shaped a formative therapeutic framework that fosters the differentiation and the emergence and consolidation of the individual as “Prosopon” (Tsegos, 1982, Tsegos & ass., 2007).

The search for methods that combine psychodynamic and social dimensions constitutes an antidote to the “biological model”, asylum-based psychiatry, ideological constructs (e.g. the perceived dangerousness of people with mental illness), and passivity. A central place is given to the concept of “emprosopon” (in-person) relating, as mental disorder is understood as a disturbance in the individual's relationship with his/her social network (Foulkes, 1975). Within the Psychotherapeutic Communities of the OPC, the strengthening of the active participation of all those involved in the psychotherapeutic process cultivates the “Peri-Ego” (around the Ego), weakens the role of singular authority and of the expert (the Super-Ego), limits guilt and enhances the capacity to experience shame (Tsegos, 1993, 2012, Tsegos & ass., 2007).

The Psychotherapeutic Communities of the OPC place particular emphasis on issues related to boundaries and personality structure and promote role rotation, aiming at the reconstruction of personality and the unfolding of the individual's inner capacities. Therapy takes place through participation in a multi-person interactive framework in which the Healthy Part of the Ego is activated and strengthened (Tsegos, 1982).

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Eli Mitroutsikou (Greece)

with Dimitris Livas, Efthymios Markezinis, Ioannis Tsegos

The Community Meeting As The Community's "Pharmakos"

R. Rapoport (1960) describes the Community Meeting—a large group setting in which all members of the Therapeutic Community (staff and patients) participate—as the central space where the Community reflects upon itself. From a group-analytic perspective, the Community Meeting constitutes the matrix of the Community: it absorbs collective tension and facilitates the working-through of conflicts and interpersonal relationships. The Community may invest the Meeting with expectations of redemption, but also with aggression and disappointment.

In periods of heightened tension, the Community Meeting may function as a space of “sacrifice,” where disappointments, conflicts, and frustrations are condensed. In such cases, the Community Meeting can be understood as a transitional space within which movement may occur from the dynamics of the “scapegoat” toward a creative collective working-through. This process strengthens the cohesion of the entire Community and enables the emergence of otherness, as well as the processing of conflicts.

The present paper explores the ways in which the Community Meeting may function as a “pharmakos,” that is, as a collective locus for the condensation, discharge, and potential transformation of tensions arising within the Therapeutic Community as a whole. The implementation of communal therapy at the Open Psychotherapy Center is reflected in the Community Meeting, where multiple therapeutic community factors can be observed, including role exchange, the assumption of responsibility, the development of healthy communication and relations (Tsegos, 2002, 2012).

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Cristos Kanana (Greece)

with Natasa Karapostoli, Ioannis Tsegos

The Group-Analytic Model of Supervision: “Closing the Circle”

In the Group-Analytic Model of Supervision, developed at the Institute of Group Analysis, Athens (Tsegos, 1984, 1995, 2002, Tsegos & Karapostoli, 2012), the group as a whole assumes the role of the supervisor. Specifically, the supervision group consists of trainees, one of whom serves as the conductor of the group, and an experienced observer, who is either a trainer or a senior trainee in the final year of training.

The supervision process includes the feelings, fantasies, and themes of each participant, which are recorded in a protocol during the presentation. These are subsequently written on a board and the supervision group attempts to synthesize them.

At the stage of synthesis, the material on the board may appear fragmented and disagreement may prevail among participants, regarding its meaning. As a result, the supervising group may be unable to function productively.

Forty-five years of experience at the I.O.A.A., along with relevant studies that have been conducted, indicate that such disagreement arises because “something is happening” within the supervision group itself. At that point, the group ceases to process the presented session, “closes the circle,” that is, turns toward the exploration of its own dynamics and intra-group relationships, where rivalry, lack of trust, negative mirroring and similar phenomena typically emerge.

This model of supervision functions as a “pharmakos,” in that it utilizes group phenomena which, although initially operating as obstacles, can through the process of “closing the circle” be transformed into constructive elements. The matrix of the supervision group, conceptualized as tripartite—encompassing the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal dimensions—allows for the working through of these relational dynamics.

Thus, participants are led toward a greater awareness of these processes and, consequently, toward maturational and developmental processes at both a personal and a professional level.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Vasiliki Karkou (Greece)

with Antigoni Lykotrafiti, Efthymios Markezinis

Recent Developments in the Psychotherapeutic Treatment of Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder – A Brief Literature Review

The aim of the present study is to review recent findings regarding the etiology, characteristics, and available therapeutic interventions for individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder, as well as to examine the effectiveness of group psychotherapy and the exploration of group boundaries. Based on a review of the Greek and international literature, the study explores different therapeutic approaches.

It is concluded that Borderline Personality Disorder results from a complex interaction of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors. Consequently, a therapeutic framework combining individual and group psychotherapy, sociotherapy, pharmacotherapy, and family therapy appears to be an effective intervention strategy. This approach forms a fundamental part of the therapeutic practice of the Open Psychotherapeutic Center, a psychiatric day treatment unit whose main characteristics are a group analytic philosophy and the therapeutic community model.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Fenia Paschou (Greece)

with Marianthi Ioannou, Athanasia Kakouri, Eftymios Markezinis

Attachment Theory and Group Analysis: Divergences and Point of Convergence

This paper reviews the literature, particularly recent contributions, examining the possible points of convergence between attachment theory and group analysis.

More specifically, the literature highlights connections between core concepts of attachment theory—such as the secure base, internal working models, and attachment patterns—and central concepts of group analytic theory, including the group tripartite matrix, the social unconscious, and ego-training-in-action. It is argued that knowledge derived from attachment theory may contribute to a deeper understanding of the group analytic matrix, enrich the conductor's perspective, and enhance the therapeutic process in the group setting.

In this sense, the dialogue between attachment theory and group analysis opens a fruitful field for further theoretical elaboration and empirical investigation.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Foteini Kalavrizioti (Greece)

with Antonis Kelakis, Christina Terlidou, Dimitra Vekiari

Young Adults' Personality Characteristics: A Retrospective Study

Young adulthood is increasingly recognized as a distinct developmental period (Arnett & Tanner, 2006), characterized by significant changes at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and social levels. Psychopathology during this stage is often associated with developmental difficulties, particularly those emerging within the family context. Consequently, this age group warrants distinct and focused investigation.

The present retrospective study examined the personality characteristics of young adults (18–25 years) who sought psychological support at the O.P.C. Data were collected using the MMPI and the Rorschach, enabling the assessment of both pathological (destructive) and adaptive (constructive) dimensions of personality functioning.

The studied population (N = 89; mean age = 22.1) comprised individuals living with their parents, engaged in studies, unemployed, who sought help for anxiety or depressive manifestations. Findings indicated adequate cognitive potential, with satisfactory perceptual and information-processing abilities. However, participants showed a tendency to rely on intuition rather than internalized psychological resources when coping with challenges. Furthermore, they demonstrated relatively weak psychological defenses, experiencing elevated levels of sadness, tension and fear, possibly associated with guardedness. Low self-esteem and a conflicted self-image were prominent. Participants also exhibited a limited capacity to learn from experience, difficulties in anger regulation, and a propensity toward acting out behaviors. Interpersonal relationships were characterized by hostility, suspiciousness, and conflict, particularly within the family and in relation to authority figures.

In conclusion, within this clinical population, emotional distress, diminished self-worth and limited actualization of personal potential (i.e., low ego strength) appear to hinder the autonomy and psychosocial maturity.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Vasiliki Karagianni (Greece)

with Christos Kanana, Ioanna Katsouri, Athanasia Kakouri

From Pharmakós to Prosopon: A Group-Analytic Experience with Caregivers.

The figure of the Pharmakós carries a persistent ambiguity: defiled yet purifying, excluded yet indispensable, sacrificed yet essential to the cohesion of the community. This paradox offers a lens through which to understand the position of the modern caregiver within the family context. When illness enters a family system, one member often takes on the role of absorbing and containing what others cannot bear. Pain, anxiety, despair, and closeness to deterioration and death converge in this role. The caregiver thus becomes both the carrier of the family's "curse" as well as a means of purification, central to survival, yet often overlooked.

This situation reflects a dynamic of coexistence, of both destructive and creative forces. Care sustains the system of relationships, while at the same time gradually restricting the caregiver's psychological space. Through processes of endurance and self-sacrifice, identity can be restricted to such an extent that the Individual risks disappearing behind this role.

Within the framework of Group Analysis, the burden that participants previously carried individually, can gradually be shared and symbolised. Attention to the group's boundaries allows it to function as a space that offers support rather than as a field for further projection. Through mirroring, resonance, and the emergence of the social unconscious, experiences that remained unspoken begin to find expression within the group.

Clinical vignettes from the group's course will illustrate how the group facilitates the transition from isolation and negative self-perception to acknowledgement and creative reappraisal. In this process, caregivers can rediscover the possibility of becoming "Prosopon" eventually integrating the paradoxical elements they once carried alone, while simultaneously renegotiating their place in the field of family relationships.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Andromachie Giannakopoulou (Greece)

with Ioannis Christopoulos, Vasiliki Karkou, Efthymios Markezinis

The Scapegoat Phenomenon: Historical Roots and Contemporary Social Manifestations

The Scapegoat phenomenon constitutes a timeless social mechanism through which human communities attempt to manage conflict and social instability. Its origins can be traced to the biblical ritual of the Old Testament, where collective guilt is symbolically transferred to a goat sent into exile. Similar practices appear in archaic myths of ancient Greek tradition, such as the pharmakos ritual, in which a person is burdened with the removal of collective impurity and the restoration of communal purification. In Roman and medieval Europe, particular social groups—such as heretics, minorities or women accused of witchcraft—were often held responsible for collective crises, thus reinforcing social cohesion through exclusion.

The scapegoat mechanism can also be understood as a social and psychological way of managing collective tension. From a sociological perspective, it contributes to the preservation of hierarchical structures and strengthening of collective identity, while anthropologically it is associated with conditions of communal pressure. On a psychological level, processes such as projection and conformity facilitate the selection of a “victim,” allowing the group to achieve temporary stabilization.

In contemporary social contexts, scapegoating mainly appears in three institutional environments: family, school, and workplace, where it no longer takes a ritual form but is instead embedded in everyday social interactions. Within families, one member may become the focal point of responsibility for internal tensions. In schools, group dynamics may lead to targeting a student, while in workplaces responsibility for collective failures may be shifted onto individual employees to preserve institutional credibility.

The study of historical and contemporary presence of the scapegoating highlights its dual significance: both as a mechanism for managing collective tension and as a process that may produce significant psychological and social consequences, including forms of social trauma, often concealing deeper causes of conflict.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Christina Kotsia (Greece)

with Panagiota Theodorou, Konstantina Latsona, Athanasia Kakouri

From Symptom to System: A Multifactorial Approach to Treating Bulimic and Self-Harming Behaviors in Adolescence

Using a clinical case of an adolescent presenting with bulimic and self-harming behaviors, the presentation explores how the distressing symptomatology of a family member, typically a child or adolescent identified as the patient, might serve a regulatory and potentially transformative function within the family as a whole.

The symptom, particularly in eating disorders, is not approached solely as individual pathology but as an expression of family dynamics. In this approach the adolescent “carries” unprocessed family and couple tensions and expresses them through acting-out behaviors, engaging in a form of self-sacrifice. The adolescent’s “illness” appears to threaten family cohesion, yet paradoxically operates as a force that gathers the family around a shared crisis, contributing to the maintenance of family homeostasis. From this perspective, the symptom both disrupts and organizes the family system, embodying the interplay of destructive and constructive forces.

The present case study, conducted at the Child and Family Therapy Unit of the Open Psychotherapy Center, follows the assessment and treatment of an adolescent over a period of one and a half years. The therapeutic approach is multifactorial, combining individual psychotherapy, family therapy, parental counselling, and pharmacotherapy.

Special attention is given to the facilitating role of family therapy in addressing issues that emerge during the adolescent’s treatment, including boundary difficulties and inappropriate coalitions, maternal overinvolvement, limited involvement of the father, marital conflicts and processes of differentiation. Through this process, the adolescent’s symptom is re-signified and comes to be understood as an expression of relational dynamics, a regulator and a catalyst for change within the family.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Ersi Kouneli (Greece)

with Birgit Schmidt, Ioannis Tsegos

The Ancient Greek Perception of Pharmakós and the Reciprocity of Gazes: the Meaning of Prosopon in Group Analysis

Various conceptual frameworks are offered in an attempt to understand the myth of Pharmakós and its dual meaning as remedy and poison. In Greek Mythology as well as in Homer’s Epics, the society is considered as a “face to face” society and the basic dimension of personal identity is the union of man with the other, the exchange of gazes and the reciprocity of seeing and being seen. Much of Foulkes’s thought reflects that view of man being social and not individual giving primacy to communication and mirroring (Foulkes, 1948, Pines 1984). Mirroring can be considered also as one of the main characteristics of Pharmakós reflecting the above perspective in a face to face communicating society.

In this paper some of the aspects of mirroring as a developmental and therapeutic factor, will be discussed with connection to:

- A. The current psychogenetic theory of inherent inter subjectivity, the basic generic predisposition of the newborn child for mirroring through following mothers gaze (Gallese, 2013).
- B. The newest neurobiological finding, mirror neurons, that is brain cells allowing us “simulate” not just other people’s actions, but the intentions and emotions behind the actions (Meltzoff, Brooks, 2007).
- C. The theory and definition of Prosopon which gives attention to the visual contact in the group analytic setting (Tsegos, 1993, 2002) and can be considered as the impact of information about the self that is derived from the influence of several eyes, constant looks and exchange of gazes.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Dimitris Moschonas (Greece)

with Efthymios Markezinis

Collective trauma, Social Unconscious and the Case of the Asia Minor Greek Catastrophe: Large Group as Pharmakós

The ancient Greek ritual of Pharmakos appeared to come from the primordial human tradition and to repeat itself even today on personal, communal, and global levels. Embodies a fundamental paradox, signifying both poison and remedy, destruction and purification. Its a “composite symbol” with a transitional function within the group. This ambivalent figure offers a powerful framework for understanding the role of groups in the containment, reproduction and transformation of collective trauma.

Drawing on group analytic theory this paper explores how collective trauma becomes embedded within the social unconscious.

The Asia Minor Greek Catastrophe (1922) is examined as a paradigmatic case of collective trauma in contemporary Greek history. The forced displacement of populations and the rupture of historical continuity produced a collective experience of loss integrated into the symbolic fabric of Greek communities through memory, narratives and cultural representations. Within this framework, collective trauma is conceptualized as an element of the group foundational matrix, manifesting in recurring patterns of victimhood, ideological polarization and unconscious anxiety.

The large group may function as Pharmakos in both destructive and creative ways. In its destructive dimension, it reproduces projection, scapegoating and splitting. In its creative dimension, it enables processes of integration, transformation and change, as exemplified by the incorporation of refugee communities into Greek society and the transmission of cultural continuity despite transgenerational trauma.

Particular emphasis is given to the democratic therapeutic community, large groups and social dreaming as contemporary forms of processing trauma.

The paper proposes three modes of trauma management: projection (pharmakós), symbolization, and collective processing. The large group thus emerges as a dynamic psychosocial field in which trauma may either be reproduced or transformed, depending on the presence of structures capable of containing conflict and generating shared meaning.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Hanan Sabah Teicher (Israel)

Poetics as Pharmakos: Reviving the Shattered Language of Wartime through “Poetic Social Dreaming Lab”

“One has never seen the world well if he has not dreamed what he was seeing.” — Gaston Bachelard

In times of acute social trauma and ongoing warfare, such as the current reality in Israel, trauma does not merely influence discourse; it shatters language itself. The integrative capacity of speech collapses, replaced by "newspeak" of splitting and attacks on linking. The poetic functions of the mind are cast out as a Pharmakos—leaving the social body trapped in a literal, non-symbolized nightmare.

The author presents the "Poetic Social Dreaming Lab", an initiative designed to reclaim the Pharmakon of language. Conducted monthly in Northern Israel, the Lab utilizes the Social Dreaming Matrix format. At each session's conclusion, participants write a “dream image.” These poetic fragments are read aloud at the start of the following meeting, creating a “dreaming chain” that binds the community's unconscious process.

Poetic Social Dreaming propose a "reverse purification rite": re-introducing the broken, nocturnal language of dreams into the matrix. By exposing the group to the poetic Pharmakon, we transform raw dreaming materials into a creative vessel—a “fertilizer” for integrative psychic and poetic action. A participant's dream illustrates this crisis:

"I enter a dark cave in the middle of the city and see bats... I take pictures, but outside the cave, the pictures have no image... To bring what is inside the cave out, I must learn their language, to translate the world into new concepts."

This inverse variation of Plato's Cave highlights the necessity of weaving together a genuine language where traditional representation fails." Poetic Social Dreaming facilitates new imagery pathways, sustaining speech even when the matrix is under threat. While Plato banished poets, Aristotle viewed poetry as “more philosophical than history”, our experience suggests that in wartime, poetry might also be more potent.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Camilla Jacobi (Denmark)

From Inadequacy to “Good Enough”: Meaningful Experiences in Group Therapy

How do the defining characteristics of contemporary culture manifest in therapeutic groups—and how can we work with them in clinical practice?

Drawing on generational traits and the Danish writer and teacher Christian Hjørtkjær's diagnosis of a youth culture marked by feelings of inadequacy and shame, this presentation explores concrete clinical examples alongside group-analytic perspectives. It examines how these cultural dynamics unfold within therapy groups and identifies the therapeutic factors that are particularly significant when working with today's patients.

The presentation is grounded in group-analytic theory, emphasizing the importance of both similarities and differences within the group. Through examples from psychiatric settings and private practice, it investigates processes such as ego training in action and highlights patients' development through integration and differentiation within the group, in interaction with the foundation matrix of our time.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Francesca Bascialla (Greece)

with Maria Sofia Troisi, Giulia Pietrangeli

Social Dreaming Matrix and the Theory of Conjuncture. Dreams and Pharmakós function

SDM is a clear reference to the symbolic, social, and cultural value of dreams, which determines the co-construction of new meanings in its practice and performance realization because signifiers are part of the matrix and context. Dreams and the matrix are a double-founded myth. Related to the topic of Pharmakós, the pandemic and the transformation of some criteria and elements in the setting, modified the perspective of the SDM into a virtual field. This virtual field is potentially so far from the sense of anthropological aspect of the presence of the body being like in a ritual of dreams. Matrices became online, and colleagues needed to change some aspects and reflection, even during a time where online experiences were already used. In this sense, we are precisely in a “structure of conjuncture”, to quote Marshall Sahlins. This is the practical realisation of cultural categories in a specific historical context, expressed by the interested action of historical agents, including the microsociology of their interaction. It also serves to understand unusual events. In fact, beyond these events (analysis), the conception of praxis as situational sociology of meanings can also be applied to the more general interpretation of cultural change.

The concept of conjunctural structure is of strategic importance in determining symbolic risks and selective reifications. In fact, the contingency of events and the recurrence of structures may not be enough. The phenomenon itself is absorbed as a significant value, and this is where its historical effectiveness derives from; but the relationship (the third party) arranges the field in a complex configuration and therefore in a conjuncture where the “historical momentum” is defined. A momentum of particular cultural or historical intensity; a point of intersection between the past and the present that offers connection and meaning. The paper explains the experience of online training and the post-pandemic experience in SDM.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Kevin Power (United Kingdom)

Freud, Shakespeare and their BCE's.

This paper at first expounds what may be a universal phenomenon, which is what I have named the Birth Conjunction Event (BCE), with examples drawn from past and present public persons, and how this may be useful in clinical practice. It then looks at how the BCE's of Freud and Shakespeare intertwine, and ends with a consideration of The Tragedy of Hamlet from a position of mourning.

WORKSHOPS

WS REF-8

SAT · 16:00–17:30 · 17 · APOLLO

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Ronnie Levine (USA)

Becoming Comfortable with Uncomfortable Feelings

In order to be effective with working with feelings generated in the group, we as group leaders need to be comfortable with feelings: our own and our group members. This can be particularly difficult in times of social upheaval, conflicts arising from social, personal and political crisis. The capacity to have reflective space can easily be undermined by the intensity of such experiences. The group leader needs to be sufficiently comfortable with his/her feelings in order to be emotionally available for addressing the group members feelings of love, hate, shame and vulnerability and all that surrounds them.

And provide what is therapeutically necessary:

Curiosity

Exploration

Holding/containing

Surviving/ withstanding - without destructive retaliation

Being a maturational agent

This workshop is designed to help therapists understand and work more comfortably with uncomfortable feelings. We will explore the difficulties working with love, hate, fear and shame. The workshop will study how we as a group can become more effective in working with these feelings. We will begin with the leader's and the group member's reluctance to have these feelings, examining what the obstacles communicate from various perspectives.

WS REF-11

SUN · 11:45–13:15 · 16 · HESTIA

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Alon Wasserman (Israel)

Let's Play! Interactions and Reflections through social games

Group psychotherapy for children and youth opens the possibility for non-verbal engagement and interaction on top of the obvious verbal tract. Via social games the group psychotherapists get the opportunity to understand different types of communication between members of the group. In our groups of children and adolescence, we experience the power of social games as a deeper exploration of the ways each group member expresses oneself, relates to other members, takes their place in group and so forth.

My workshop gives the opportunity for adults to experience the powerful platform of human relationship's "lab". We will study the benefits, while enjoying ourselves, playing social games that teach us the ways we influence others and the hidden ways our subconscious is expressed. The games we choose to play may reflect the issue of Pharmakos – just as words can constrain and/or enhance understanding, so can the nature of the game and the role we choose to play in it, extend understanding. Some games may elicit the experience of scapegoating; others may reflect the leader's role and so forth. All in all, our shared social unconscious comes to play.

We'll play together and experiment with different interactions among us, taking the time to reflect on the personal and interpersonal themes that arise throughout the game, play another game, reflect again, and so forth. This workshop has been designed to have serious learning through fun games.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dimitrios Zachos (Greece)

Body - Mind Duality? The contribution of the somatic countertransference to the containment process within the therapeutic process of an analytic group.

Following Freud, a lot has been written about countertransference, though the sad fact remains that a considerable number of authors have not in effect focused on the exploration of the concept from a bodily perspective. Indeed, intense bodily responses evoked in a therapist were evidently seen as the therapist's weaknesses rather than valuable information which can assist the therapeutic process.

Sandler et al. (1992) defines it as 'the specific emotionally based responses aroused in the analyst by the specific qualities of his patient' (p. 96) which may return some meaning to the countertransference concept. According to Hopper (2006) countertransference processes 'are as powerful in groups as they are in the clinical dyad and, therefore, are potentially both destructive and helpful in clinical work' (p. 557).

The evidence of the significance of the body in psychotherapy has been present since Freud's statement that, 'the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego' (Freud, 1923) and that there might be a link between bodily sensations and unconscious phenomena (Freud, 1938/1940).

Somatic countertransference is defined as the therapist's somatic reactions towards his patient (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 2007) or the effect of the patient and the patient's material on the therapist's body (Forester, 2007). The somatic countertransference can manifest itself as both, an external body-expression, and an internal somatic state (Warnecke, 2011). According to Bion (1962) containment is a process whereby the recipient (the container) takes on the projected emotions, digests them, and returns them to the individual (contained) in a more manageable, processed form. This can be perceived as a kind of emotional "detoxification" or digestion (Bion 1962). The container helps transform unmanageable emotions into thinkable thoughts by absorbing and metabolising them.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dale Godby (USA)

with Melissa Wallace

Co-Therapy: Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil (Kohélet 4:9)

TITLE: Co-Therapy: Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil (Kohélet 4:9)

This experiential workshop is designed for clinicians who are currently practicing co-therapists, have prior experience in co-therapy, or are considering entering a co-therapeutic partnership.

Drawing on clinical vignettes and live role-play, participants will observe and reflect on the relational field of co-therapy—attending to the collaboration, rivalry, resonance, and rupture that may arise within the therapeutic dyad across diverse treatment contexts. We will illustrate ways in which the co-therapy pair can explore the trust/mistrust dynamic in the service of helping the group members develop their tolerance for ambiguity and ambivalence.

We will examine both visible and invisible differences that shape the co-therapeutic pair—gender, age, professional identity, seniority, class background—and explore how these differences are amplified, muted, or enacted within the clinical matrix. When symbolized and metabolized, such differences can deepen the therapeutic process. When disavowed or defensively organized against, they may destabilize both the partnership and the treatment.

In this workshop, we will ask: What strengthens the co-therapy relationship and what weakens it? And how might the co-therapeutic bond itself become a generative instrument of transformation—for the therapists and the patients they serve?

The presenters co-lead a long-term therapy group and co-supervise co-therapy pairs within a group format, bringing sustained, practice-based experience to the discussion.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

CARLA B. PULLIAM (USA)

with Melissa Black, Melissa Wallace

Reclaiming Her-Story: Trust, Storytelling, and Identity Development in Women's Process Groups

For women, trust and the capacity to use one's voice are shaped by sociocultural conditions that influence relational development, expectations of care, and identity formation. Early relational patterns transmitted through attachment and social expectation shape women's experience of closeness and belonging (Chodorow, 1978/1979), and their development is situated in relational ethics where voice and relationship are co-constructed (Gilligan, 1982). Further, women's relationships evolve in patriarchal contexts that shape women's perceptions of self and other (Einhorn, 2021).

In line with the Symposium theme, "Niceness" is *Pharmakos*. Nice women in the earliest stages of group can lend to cohesion and a feeling of safety, but this can quickly become stultifying and eventually destructive as "nice" does not make room for any emotional experience that is not approving, empathic, sympathetic or caring. The novice therapist may mistake the nice, caring and empathic group for one that is doing its work, but the collusion to exclude the direct expression of negative emotional experience often leads to the passive and potentially destructive expression of negative affect prevailing in the group.

This workshop examines trust formation and identity development and maintenance, citing examples from a 1.5-year psychotherapy process group for professional women, a 25+ year open women's process group and an early-stage group that did not survive. Survey data and narrative report will include themes and defenses unique to women's groups.

Workshop attendees identifying as women will engage in an experience where they will be asked to briefly narrate their own "Her"-story that has emerged through group participation. Interested individuals identifying as men are invited to observe. Narrating "Her" -story experientially will further amplify and consolidate processes that group-based trust enables, making possible new tellings, revisions, and ownership of women's stories: "Her-stories" emerging within community and against the backdrop of "His-tory."

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Irena Beqja (Albania)

with Mia Stenersen, Maria Puschbeck, Susan Convery

Facing Internalised Misogyny Together: A Women-Only Group-Analytic Exploration Across Socio-political, Theoretical and Clinical Dimensions

Across professional, theoretical and clinical contexts, women continue to encounter invisibility, silencing and subordination in relation to patriarchal authority, reflecting wider sociopolitical dynamics of exclusion, polarisation and scapegoating that resonate with the mythic figure of the *Pharmakós* as both expelled victim and potential source of renewal (Jacques Derrida, 1981). Benjamin (1988) shows how hierarchical gender relations become psychically internalised: may operate destructively within and between women, fostering rivalry, compliance and unconscious collusion with oppressive structures (Jessica Benjamin, 1988); yet its recognition within a group-analytic space can open possibilities for transformation, reparation and creative social change. For women mental health professionals shaped by patriarchal cultures, engaging with these internalised blind spots is therefore both a clinical and ethical task, enabling deeper therapeutic work with the gendered internal oppressor and the pain and ambiguity from which it emerges.

Inspired by Sue Einhorn's 44th Foulkes Lecture (2021), the co-conveners established a GASi Special Interest Group in April 2022 as a women-only reflective space dedicated to challenging internalised misogyny. Now in its fourth cycle, this work highlights the need for culturally and diversity-attuned engagement with processes of negative mirroring, marginalisation and reparation within the group matrix. Over recent years, exploration of internalised misogyny has generated both theoretical reflection and lived relational experience, at times fostering closeness and recognition, and at others evoking withdrawal, ambivalence and avoidance, reflecting the tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition within relational life (Jessica Benjamin, 1988). These tensions demonstrate how internalised misogyny is not only a concept to be discussed but a dynamic enacted within relationships, shaping intimacy, rivalry, identification and retreat.

Arising from this experience, the workshop invites women from diverse cultural contexts to explore internalised misogyny across socio-political, theoretical and clinical dimensions through brief thematic inputs and facilitated experiential group process, supporting inclusive participation and collective reflection toward gender equality.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Dimitrios Tachmatzidis (Greece)

with Polymnia Anna Chasioti

Transformations of “O”: The Villain as Pharmakós and the Therapeutic Potential of Narrative Character Development

This workshop proposes that the act of creating a fictional villain is not merely a narrative exercise but a structured encounter with Bion's concept of “O” — the absolute truth of experience prior to thought, which cannot be known but only lived. Drawing on Bion's Transformations (1965), we argue that screenwriting and narrative character development constitute a privileged site of transformation: a process through which raw, unmentalised experience (beta-elements) undergoes alpha-function, becoming available for thought, symbol, and meaning.

Within this framework, the villain figure functions as a Pharmakós: a character onto whom split-off, shadow, and unacknowledged aspects of the self and group are projected. Like the ancient ritual scapegoat — simultaneously vessel of contamination and agent of renewal — the crafted villain holds what the group cannot yet speak. The group-as-creator enacts the K-link (knowledge-in-relation), approaching the unknowable “O” of its own disowned experience through the safe container of fiction. What cannot be integrated directly may be approached, witnessed, and metabolised through the character.

The workshop unfolds in two parts. In the theoretical section (40 minutes), participants are introduced to Bion's transformations and the “O”-narrative nexus, alongside the Kuleshov effect and mirror neuron research as evidence of cinema's capacity for projective identification; attachment theory and defensive structures as character-building tools; and Jung's Persona/Shadow dynamic as the psychological architecture of villainy. In the experiential section (50 minutes), participants first analyse a well-known cinematic villain through the lens of these frameworks, then work in small groups to construct an original villain and write a brief scene in which the Pharmakós dynamic is consciously engaged rather than enacted. The group-as-audience then functions as analytic container, and the discussion that follows mirrors the work of group analysis.

The workshop invites participants to consider narrative not as representation of reality but as transformation of “O” — moving from

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Judith Enders (Germany)

with Frauke Glöckner

Between Scylla and Charybdis: Institutional conflicts in the group analytic field

The 2 sessions workshop uses the Odyssey episode of Scylla and Charybdis as a metaphor for institutional conflicts in which conductors, group members, teams or managements find themselves “between two evils”: every course of action threatens to generate losses. A conflict-free path does not exist. Under the symposium's theme, this situation is understood as an expression of negative mirroring and the dynamics of Pharmakós, in which individuals or groups are burdened with guilt, failure, and “toxicity”, while simultaneously being idealized or sacrificed as potential “cures.”

The focus is on constructively dealing with ambivalence: instead of denying it through division (“good/bad,” “perpetrator/victim”), ambivalence should be experienced as a necessary, creative resource of institutional life. The mythological figure Scylla represents fragmenting, expulsive tendencies—the “biting out” of individuals, rigid boundaries, aggressive loyalties. Charybdis, on the other hand, symbolizes being swallowed up in the maelstrom of the institution: fusion, the compulsion of loyalty, fear of exclusion, and the sinking of individuality into collective affect.

In this workshop, a real institutional conflict (brought in by the participants or outlined by the convenors) will be explored. The workshop is aimed at group analysts, psychotherapists and those working in institutions who are grappling with conflicts, restructuring, or “toxic” atmospheres and wish to explore these in light of Mythos, Pharmakós concept, and group-analytic theory.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Reshmi Sahadevan (India)

with Muhammed Shameel Khan

Becoming Ourselves: Transmission, Identity, Scapegoating and Separation in Group Analytic Trainings in India and Pakistan

This workshop explores the emergence of group analytic training in India and Pakistan, marking the recent inauguration of the Indian Society for Group Analysis alongside the parallel initiation of training in Pakistan. Situated within politically divided yet historically intertwined contexts, we ask what it means for analytic institutions to come into being in lands shaped by partition, colonialism and other enduring forms of violence.

We propose that training institutions, like groups, emerge through processes of identification, differentiation, ambivalence, and separation. New trainings initially identify with founding traditions, but over time, they begin to differentiate, adapting theory and practice to local contextual realities. This process inevitably raises difficult questions: what can be adapted and whose training is it?

Trainings can be spaces of growth, confrontation and transformation, but may also evoke experiences of retraumatization, exclusion, scapegoating and sacrifice. Drawing upon the figure of the pharmakos and the ambiguity of the pharmakon, simultaneously both poison and cure, we ask: what allows a training to move toward repair rather than expulsion? What happens to aggression, hatred and envy within institutions as they aspire toward healing? Can ambivalence be tolerated without evacuating it into a scapegoated other?

The workshop will include a video montage of trainees from India and Pakistan reflecting on authority, belonging, exclusion and moments of impasse within the training. These reflections will serve as a stimulus for a larger group discussion exploring how new analytic communities come to be and what it takes for them to survive. The workshop hopes to create space for how healing and harm, love and aggression, can coexist within trainings. We invite conversation on whether emerging analytic communities in South Asia can hold their histories without disowning them, remain reachable by what emerges between them, and become themselves without requiring the sacrifice of the other.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Mukti Shah (India)

with Debashree Unni

Fading Matrices?

Fading Matrices?

“For some reason people have always wished to see a representation of themselves enacted. This is a communal experience.”

— Goran Marković

Opening Keynote Lecture, GASI Symposium, Belgrade

‘Fading Matrices?’ is an experimental play that tries to redefine conventional academic presentation formats. It invites a communal exploration of a theme that many trainee-group analysts are familiar with- wrestling with negative mirroring and the poison of self doubt that failing groups evoke. In this dramatic table reading a group of conductors gather to speak about groups that collapse suddenly, groups that fade slowly, and the private fear of “Am I any good at this?”.

After the performance the audience is invited to reflect on their own experiences of holding the many dualities that being a ‘good enough group analyst’ demand of us. What might help us integrate these? How do we work through the shame and grief that emerge when therapy groups falter, shrink, or end too soon? What might be some implications for group analytic training in this context?

SOCIOPOLITICAL

ALICE MULASSO (Italy)

with Marina Mojovic, Mark Morbe, ILARIA LOCATI, Branka Bakic, Kostantinos Liolios, Franca Fubini

REFLECTIVE CITIZENS KOINONIA: CARING AS CITIZENS FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITIES

The methodology of the Reflective Citizens Koinonia (RC) is nowadays well recognized in our professional as well as the wider psycho-social fields - spread around many cities and countries (Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, UK, Ireland, USA, ...). Initiated by Dr. Marina Mojovic and Dr. Jelica Sataric in Belgrade after the terrible nineties, this community intervention is nowadays ever so needed in order to enhance a citizenship based on listening, dialogue, thinking together and activism. In a geopolitical context threatened by violence, wars and economic powers, it becomes paramount not to rely on a superficial knowledge made of slogans and hyper processed information but rather engage in an understanding based on collective thinking, dialogue, openness to diversity and new thoughts.

The workshop about RC community intervention is articulated in two sessions. The first session aims at conveying the methodological frame of RC and illustrating its applications in different contexts – countries, cities, organizations, institutions, etc... in an open exchange and dialogue with participants in the spirit of RC. The steps and the training to found an RC branch will be tackled bringing examples from different contexts.

The second session is a mini RC workshop in order to experience the methodology: the outcome of a careful articulation of siblings fields, starting with a matrix of social dreaming, followed by the first RC large group, the small leaderless groups and closing with the second RC large group, review and applications. There will be time for questions on the methodology and its applications. It is also an opportunity to make contacts for those participants that wish to found an RC branch in their own community .

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Felix Korf (Germany)

Group analysis for cancer patients

Can we offer group analysis to people suffering from cancer? This can be an opportunity to revisit group-analytic practice and theory: Regarding practice, we can compare our experiences with such groups. In the medical field of oncology, treatment is predominantly biological; and comes with its (at times traumatic) side effects. To offer patients a space for making sense of their situation in a group – as a rather different kind of *Pharmakós* – might be regarded with a peculiar scepticism by both staff and patients. Regarding theory, we can discuss whether the available group-analytic literature on the role of the body (e.g. Nitsun 2006; Hadar 2017) addresses issues of physical health sufficiently. Which assumptions do we make about patients and their distress? Foulkes (1964:7) questions the distinction between physical and psychological causes as a “pseudo problem”; but in daily practice, do we not make some distinction, however unclear the difference may be (Roberts, 1991)? Can we make use of insights from psychoanalysis or existential psychotherapy (e.g. Yalom, 1980)? How does group analysis compare to other group approaches in oncology (e.g. Franzoi, 2024)? The workshop aims for a discussion on issues of health, age and illness, possibly relevant to groups more generally.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Ivan Urlich (Croatia)

with Avi Berman, Miriam Berger

Human suffering: By-standing vs Involvement – on creating Koinonia.

Most of us, as citizens and professionals, live in a complex, painful socio-political reality. We assume that each of us, as well as our patients, moves between the poles of distant indifference and intense emotions of love and hate. We may oscillate between bystanding and involvement. In this workshop, we will invite participants to share their personal and professional experiences from personal and social realities. Through this sharing, we will strive to make the meeting a Koinonia where we can mutually understand our experiences and gain the insights we need. The meeting will begin with brief presentations, followed by an open dialogue.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH

Martin Luedemann (Germany)

with Markus Feil

Beyond therapy, what else could Group Analysis offer?

With creativity and innovation, we would like to claim that the time is right to unleash the potential of Group Analytic thinking and practice, and to make it applicable to other contexts than therapy only. The process from the couch to the circle could be continued through taking the circle out of the consulting room. Although Group Analysis is an established and powerful way to provide group therapy, the core ideas of Group Analytic thinking and practice could be applied beyond the therapeutic context. Core ideas: the individual as a social being, the network of lived relationships as a significant influence on the development process and personality, the matrix as a model for a group's network, and the idea that free communication in the group is what improves the patient's life and strengthens the group.

These ideas can be used in organisational consultancy, team development and supervision.

- Working with groups and organisations with a Group Analytic lens means, on one hand, to perceive the phenomena as products of complex social interactions and not driven by individuals and personality only. On the other hand, Group Analytic interventions are putting the group into the focus and support free associations and interactions. Allowing everyone to express their thoughts and feelings can encourage communication, strengthen relationships, solve conflicts and improve teamwork. The matrix concept can help to provide an organisational understanding of ongoing processes and to make sense of puzzling behaviour. Large group interventions are made to work with the whole body of the organisation. Examples will be provided.

Group Analytic ideas could also be used to inspire a dialogue among citizens who are not used to talk to each other. We report about our experiences in Frankfurt/Germany. And, because it should be a workshop, the participants will be asked for examples of their own.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Sanja Janovic (Croatia)

with Tija Despotovic

The basic faults in the group: Understanding the Nothingness

The aim of our workshop is to continue the process that started at the Belgrade GASi Symposium. We propose a two day workshop, and we would like to open up spaces for new conversations that will bring to light the multiple themes that are unspoken. The idea is to provide opportunities for people to meet and engage with an inability of dialogue continuation in different ways, and from many perspectives. The same questions remained: How do we deal with the feelings over the conflict in the Western Balkans (former Yugoslavia), and what could group analysis offer in this context? How is it possible that we continue and develop new individual connections but fail in groups? Is there a way to overcome that ancient dichotomy? We hope to explore the Matrix, our shared common background that determines meaning and importance of all events, and space once shared that ceased to exist through traumatic experiences.

We offer the space to explore on how the idea of Nothingness as a group phenomenon in which group members or societies share an unspoken idea, and how it fits into the theoretical frame of basic fault and basic assumptions. The paradigm we use is a silent (mute/deaf dance) that is played throughout Dinaric Alps that span across West Balkan.

We apply the concept of Pharmakos on understanding and healing the conflicts. 30 years after the conflict we are witnessing that connections are made on the edges of the destroyed tissue of the societal matrix and understand those connections as a transformative potential of unspeakable toward communication and reparation.

We want to explore if it is possible to create a different atmosphere and experience, a state comparable to basic trust in a group 'the capacity for an unsuspecting... object-relationship' (Balint, 1968).

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Markus Schirpke (Germany)

Men: Known/unknown group beings?

The workshop is open to everyone. It will address the question of how well the needs of men in groups can be met. Role-playing and group scenarios will be used to approach this topic. How can men talk about shameful topics in groups, such as low sperm count, prostate enlargement, testosterone decline, masturbation, hair loss, being victims of verbal and physical violence, feelings of inferiority, and fear of failure? How does male "weakness" influence their place in the hierarchy of the male group? How do men differ from other genders in their grieving process? How does the composition of the group influence the men's behavior? Do men have less empathy for themselves than others? Do men recognize misandry and can they address it? How do men feel when they stand next to each other while urinating? Is competition valued or devalued? Is it acceptable to emphasize success? And many more topics!

How do we and groups deal with the "potency" and "weakness" of men?

I look forward to working with you on group therapy "medicine" with a specific focus on men.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Christos Kanana (Greece)

with Alen Mančić

The Sound of the Between: Musical Processes of the Group

Powell and Koukis describe the group as an unrehearsed performance shaped by rhythm, tension and evolving form, the conductor's role mainly in drawing out meaning from the matrix. We find ourselves closer to Wotton, for whom the matrix itself is music since we relate inherently through rhythmic, temporal processes of attunement that precede and exceed language, with meaning emerging in the relational "between," and the conductor as a "tonic note" providing orientation, security and containment, yet remaining embedded within the emergent, self-organizing process of the group. This shift allows us to reconsider the group as *pharmakós*. Musicality here becomes both the medium of injury and healing. Change, in this frame, is the development of flexibility in relational timing—what Wotton describes as a capacity for "transposition": the ability to remain oneself while coming into tune with others. Our workshop invites participants to explore these ideas experientially. Working with voice, rhythm, silence, and improvisation, we will experiment with the group's musical matrix to enact a composition through which the paradox of *pharmakós* can be felt, negotiated and potentially transformed.

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SOCIOPOLITICAL

Dick Blackwell (United Kingdom)

with Dick Blackwell and friends. Friends TBA Friends

Is a Radical Alternative Group Analysis still possible or is it petit bourgeois authoritarianism and conformism for ever?

It is proposed to hold the workshop on each of the three days covering each of the three daily themes.

Current social tensions within GASi, its alleged wish to be genuinely international rather than just European, along with talk of 'decolonising', highlight powerful tendencies within GA towards an essentially white, middle-class identity and world view. We also find serious deficiencies in GA thinking about how to negotiate with those with whom we profoundly disagree and to whom we are ideologically opposed. While Foulkes clearly recognised the social and political dimensions of the 'unconscious' many of the most dominant voices in GA insist on a model of clinical practice divorced from the world of politics and culture with all its conflicts and contradictions. Much training research are organised in conformity with this model: An essentially positivist and therefore anti-dialectical model. A model that has been produced in a white middle-class ghetto that refuses to recognise and acknowledge the constraints and limitations of its values and perspectives. On each day a short presentation will be offered as a basis for large group dialogue to explore the issues raised. Day 1 will address the global political situation including the genocide in Palestine, the latest versions of US imperialism and the spread of populism and authoritarianism, considering both a group analytic approach to these developments and the way GA is permeated by them. Day 2 will consider both Foulkes' view that GA is, in itself, a mode of research, and the way this is negated by positivist outcome studies and attempts to 'prove it works' within an oppressive system of social management and control. Day 3 will emphasise the anti-liberation tendencies in the way GA practice is being developed and the way students are being 'trained' in conformity.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Robi Friedman (Israel)

The fascination of dreams' requests for containment.

Dreaming may be considered as our psychic elaboration of exciting and threatening emotions and relations. Dreamers' elaboration effort of both personal as well as social concerns and transform them into dreams. If dreamers find a resonating space she/he will be able and willing to share dreams in order to make further elaboration of the dream's communication possible. Group analysis communicative approaches provides with ways in which the rich potential responses of the group can be optimally used for a shared group work. In the workshop, illuminating dialogues with dreams' unconscious requests for containment and demands for influence will help us grow. The group and its individuals may develop and cure through a deep and fascinating exchange between all participants, including the conductor.

The workshop will provide views on how to promote the trust that a shared dream can be the beginning of a dialogue with oneself and others. Trusting our dreams may deepen the trust in others and in ourselves.

CLINICAL AND TRAINING

Egle Pauziene (Lithuania)

with Mirjana Pernar, Kristian Valbak

In Pursuit of the 'Golden Standard': Between Structure and Living Process in Group Analytic Training

This workshop explores the role and function of the standards in group analytic training, combining a conceptual overview with an experiential format. We will start with a brief presentation of EGATIN's Essential Training Standards, inviting participants to explore the key questions: What elements of group analytic training are essential and inalienable? Should standards define minimal requirements or serve as guiding recommendations? Are current training standards pertinent for the various applications of group analysis?

A metaphorical way to think about standards may come from the tension between Apollo, representing clarity and structure, and Dionysus, embodying emotion and transformation. The dynamic of such continuum is presented in S.H. Foulkes' concept of the group analytic situation, which holds together a structured analytic frame and the emergent process of the group matrix. Within this perspective, training standards may have an Apollonian role, giving form to the discipline, while the evolving practice of group analysis retains Dionysian vitality.

In the second part of the workshop participants are invited into an interactive process exploring these opposite viewpoints. The reflective exercise will focus on identifying the essential 'Ariadne thread' that must be preserved within group analytic training through its standards.

Rather than aiming for consensus, we will seek to deepen collective reflection and articulate shared principles. The task is not to resolve this tension, but to sustain it creatively, and maintaining a thread of continuity without constraining the living development of the field.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Ulrike Kluge (Germany)

with Jens Preil

Group Analysis as a Political Space for Solidary Transformation?!

The idea for this workshop is born out of a need to explore the political dimension of group analysis in the face of current wars and conflicts. Drawing on Arendt's concept of the "space in-between" and Foulkes' "group matrix", the group is conceptualized as a public and political space constituted through speech and action.

In the first part of the workshop we introduce contemporary social diagnoses—such as Stephan Lessenich's "externalization society," the notion of the "vulnerable subject" (Jürgen Habermas), and "vulnerability in resistance" (Judith Butler, Gambetti, Sabsay) focusing on perspectives where migration isn't an infrastructural challenge but rather an analytical lens.

Focusing on the impact of war, migration, and social crisis on analytic and group-analytic practice, the workshop draws – in the second part- on vignettes to explore how practitioners can remain in contact with experiences of helplessness, loss, and destructiveness without retreating into privatized "conversations of intimacy" (Arendt). Against the backdrop of societies saturated with crisis yet struggling to process collective loss, the question arises whether political impasses are rooted in an (in)capacity to mourn.

In the third part the workshop explores how psychoanalytic and group-analytic settings and concepts such as Winnicott's "holding", Bion's "containing" and Foulkes' "resonance" may function as spaces in which political grief becomes thinkable, shareable, and transformative.

Drawing on Attic tragedy, group processes are understood as forms of political action in which failure, guilt, and unpredictability can be endured and worked through.

In part four of the workshop: the joined discussion, we would like to focus on three dimensions: the group as a public and political space, a conception of the human being in plurality, and ethics of objection as a group-analytic stance. We would like to end the workshop with asking: how such processes could inform broader societal spaces between polis and group.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Julia Borossa (United Kingdom)

with Sally Skaife, Jud Stone

How Can we Talk about Palestine?

At the 2023 GASI symposium, a group of women presented three workshops entitled 'Can we talk about Palestine?'. Feeling silenced in forums where we had tried to raise the subject of Palestine, we shared films, poetry and psychoanalytic writing as an opening for discussion. Three years later it seems impossible not to talk about Palestine since a genocide (as found by the ICJ), perpetrated by Israel and backed by the US and European countries, has been taking place. However, in many of these countries, speaking up for Palestine has been criminalised. The same silencing along with enactments have been mirrored in GASI, including a member being reported to the police, and similar silencing taking place in other organisations.

At the heart of Group Analysis is the principle that we talk to one another freely. Conflict is understood as inherent to meaningful dialogue. But whilst Group Analysts acknowledge the need to address what has now escalated well beyond Palestine, despite many attempts, fruitful discussion stalls. How are we to talk about Palestine?

We propose the notion that one problem may lie in the framing of the dialogue as two sides trying to resolve a conflict evoking notions of splitting, polarisation, of not reaching the depressive position. This goes with another principle we seem to hold as dear, the idea that all voices need to be heard equally, whilst some voices align with discourses that dominate.. In a recent podcast, the psychoanalyst Agvi Saketopoulou suggests that discussion might instead draw on seeing our aggression, not as a destructive force but as a libidinous one. How do ethics operate under these conditions? As resisters, should we try to be bearable in order to preserve ties we value? Or is it time to embrace the risk of being unbearable?

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Joan Fogel (United Kingdom)

with David Glyn

BEING JEWISH

Our Society has a significant Jewish heritage and membership worldwide and in Israel.

Historically and in the current global context, it is unsurprising that we meet, in ourselves and in our relations with one another, complicated and confusing responses.

Until now it has seemed difficult, if not impossible to explore these together. Pursuing the Symposium theme *Pharmakós*, we shall seek in this workshop to create the conditions in which the group, once “the site of psychic injury”, might become “the space of potential healing.”

We imagine the workshop to be a median group open to all those interested in what it means to “be Jewish”. That is, you don’t have to be Jewish to participate.

SOCIOPOLITICAL

Hind Zahdeh (Palestine)

with Chris Fitzstevens, Frank Mischke

FRIENDSHIP AND GROUP IN A TIME OF UPHEAVAL**1. CONTEXT:**

In this time of global crisis, we pause to reflect on the value of group practice. We come together as colleagues to build friendships and community over time, often breaking down barriers that otherwise might exist.

2. AIM:

A Palestinian group therapist from Bethlehem and two Americans of German descent, one a practicing Analytic group therapist, and the other a retired educator, having met at GASI in Berlin in 2017, come together, in order to generate a discussion pondering what happens when the “done-to” becomes the “doer” (Benjamin, 2004), both interpersonally and politically. We examine how family and cultural histories often play out in the public realm and consider how group work might intervene in these power dynamics. We study the realities of how disappeared words (Rothberg, 2019), phrases or ideas illuminate the realities of the complicity of silence. We examine how power dynamics, that is who holds political and military ‘power over’, interfere with the possibility of genuine dialogue which can not occur in an environment without true mutuality.

3. PURPOSE:

After sharing their own experiences, the three presenters will invite workshop participants to a discussion about the possibilities for the potential healing generated in friendship and group work where tensions can exist and repair is not necessarily the goal. How can we remain in the power imbalance and use the sense of overwhelm (Saketopoulou, 2026), to create and extend to new possibilities in relating and talking in Group and the global environment in general? Can we in fact talk about power differentials throughout the globe, and remain engaged even though the tensions are high? Can group work allow for the existence of tension and the creation of possibilities simultaneously? Can we contain the fears of conflict and not see it as dangerous but generative? Might there be new ways of relating that welcome discomfort rather than require the absence of it (which often reverts to gratification of the ‘power over’ dynamic)? Could we create a way of relating in groups that moves beyond who is right or wrong to consider what we might learn from each other in the profound tensions? Can we examine which conflicts are interpersonal vs. intrapsychic? Is humiliation and the fear of it the ultimate driver? Are those in power humiliating others as a way of ‘treating’ the humiliation they have lived through in early life, either politically or culturally, or within their families from a dominating parent or bullying classmate?

These are the questions we would like to consider in our discussion. Since GASI survived the “Can we talk about Palestine?” and, also the “Decolonizing Group Analysis” workshops 3 years ago in Belgrade, might we benefit from imagining what could be next? Do we dare to dream of what could be beyond? Can there be mental health without social justice and equity?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Participants will examine their friendships to understand more about their willingness to move into the discomfort of relating to another (other) who is different from themselves.
2. Participants will reflect on the idea of the human tendency to ‘other’ as a mechanism to keep the self in the discourse of comfort rather than overwhelm, as a way of coping with social, political and cultural tensions and social injustice and inequity.
3. Participants will be able to consider the ‘disappearing words’ or ideas that emerge in their own speech space.