Over the past 25 years, group analysis has been much influenced by new developments in psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, evolutionary neurobiology, and evolutionary psychology. Basic group-analytic concepts are now being validated and reinforced by new knowledge of developmental processes in infancy and childhood. The development of both our brain as the “organ of sociality” and our “personality” begins as early as \textit{in utero}. A child first learns how and whether to trust others and how to manage its emotions through empathy and sensitive responsiveness of its parents. Infant mental and emotional development is indebted to “good enough” environmental responses. Understanding these early influences is important because, among other things, it makes us aware how difficult it may be to influence such early factors by psychotherapy.

\textbf{Key words:} adaptation, psychological; child development; object attachment; personality development; psychoanalysis; psychotherapy, group; self psychology; social environment

The theme of this article is derived from a challenging paper with the title “There Is Something More than Interpretation”\textsuperscript{(1)}. In that paper, the Boston Study Group for the Process of Change concerns itself with how we can integrate new knowledge of developmental processes in infancy and childhood with change processes in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. I use this opportunity to bring attention to the “something more”, which I have found intriguing and challenging for enlarging the frame of reference of group analytic psychotherapy. Twenty years ago, I published a paper with the title “The Frame of Reference of Group Psychotherapy”\textsuperscript{(2)}. Now the frame is both deeper and wider.

Group analytic psychotherapy is open at its boundaries to knowledge derived from other systems, e.g., historical and cultural psychology \textsuperscript{(3)}, Gestalt psychology (through Goldstein and Gelb), Erikson’s move from psychosexual development to psychosocial development, and Foulkes’ acknowledgments of the contributions of Julian Huxley in biology and ethology \textsuperscript{(4)}. So what are today’s equivalents? I will make suggestions according to what has attracted my interests in recent years: developments in psychoanalysis, with special attention to relational psychoanalysis and to self-psychology; attachment theory; and evolutionary biology and economic theory, which deal with issues such as trust and “transfer”.

\textbf{Psychoanalysis}

Relational psychoanalysis and self-psychology have emerged as strong forces mostly within the United States in the past quarter of a century. European psychoanalysis has been more closed to these developments. Controversies over Klein and Lacan have taken the forefront, leaving less space for the “third force”, represented by the independent group in Great Britain – Winnicott, Balint, and latterly Bollas – who place relational forces over instinctual and intrapsychic development. Even Kleinian theory has become more interpsychic, as opposed to intrapsychic, following Bion’s ideas about the container and contained relationship.

I have long been an admirer of Hans Loewald, the “quiet revolutionary” within American psychoanalysis, who used the concept of \textit{fields} to describe the development process of the infant in relation to the caregiver. Loewald \textsuperscript{(5)} argued that instinctive forces are co-created by baby and mother, although culture (the social) is powerfully imprinted on biology throughout life and deeply implicated in the process of development and psychotherapy. Loewald is given a prominent place in the last book by Stephen Mitchell \textsuperscript{(6)}. The relational school in the United States follows the lead of Harry S. Sullivan, who was much influenced by the social psychologist, G.H. Mead. Sullivan was concerned with the vicissitudes and development of the self and its social construction. These ideas have been further developed by Ralph Stacey \textsuperscript{(7)}, a British group analyst, who has the chair of complexity theory at the University of Hertfordshire and whose important work links Mead and Foulkes. Dalal \textsuperscript{(8)} has enlarged the frame of reference of group analysis by his attention to Norbert Elias’s radical challenges to Freud’s instinctual basis of per-
sonality development, to which Foulkes remained loyal.

Self and relational psychoanalysis place intersubjectivity and empathy in the center of the therapeutic enterprise. Empathy enlarges connectedness (9). The caring capacity that humans can bestow on each other is a process essential to complex social life, and can also be found among primates (10). Empathy and sensitive responsiveness make emotional distress more manageable and their absence in childhood and in the present isolates the person into their own island of fear and pain. The presence and action of the empathic other is an essential factor in affect regulation. Its absence leads to pathological attempts to control affects and leads to a gamut of pathological states and failures in self-esteem maintenance for which the person desperately and pathologically attempts to compensate. Being exposed to a "feeling thinking" with others strengthens the self-reflective capacity without which our emotional development remains limited. The therapeutic group offers the possibility of a reflective space for all, space which is gradually constructed by the participants, predominately to begin with by the conductor who promotes the culture of inquiry, looking for meaning beyond the visible: Agazarian's invisible group (11). The culture of inquiry has at its base the culture of embeddedness, the gradual growth of trust in the therapeutic enterprise, tested out repeatedly at the boundaries of the therapeutic situation. Participants look for the presence, or absence, of therapeutic authority, the super-ego function in the person of the group conductor who combines in his/her person the super-ego aspects of parental society with the ego function of a dynamic administrator and who is the "first servant of the group."

Nitsun's concept of the anti-group (12), his emphasis on the recognition of and working with the hidden anti-therapeutic forces inherent in all therapeutic situations is an important contribution. The British psychoanalyst Phil Mollon in his recent book on Kohut and self psychology proposes that we also work with the concept of the anti-self object (13). The self-object concept relates to those essential activities of caregivers toward children without which they fail to thrive, as most dramatically demonstrated by infants who are cared for physiologically, but starved psychologically: babies who die of Marasmus in institutions, whose development is retarded in neglectful families, and who present society with horrible problems in countries that have been devastated by the catastrophes of war, persecution, famine, and natural disasters. The anti-self object concept is applied to natural caregivers who deprive children of their essential psychological and emotional enzymes and proteins, those who fail in, what Bion has called, reveries and alpha functions. The anti-self object also represents the alienating mirror that leads to distortions in self-concepts, to self-hatred, self-contempt, narcissistic defenses of arrogance, contempt, and projection of unwanted aspects of the self into others. These are distortions that group processes reveal and can begin to correct. The group as a reflective entity gradually becomes the empathic other for its members who have themselves worked to assemble this sensitive mirroring other.

The reflective space is also an acoustic space, a sonorous space for resonance and empathic responsiveness. The concept of the dialogical unconscious captures the notion of how we bury those aspects of ourselves that have not been accepted and understood in early years, e.g., we grew up in the family the could not tolerate the aggression, curiosity, dirtiness, and noisiness of infants and small children. This concept has been illuminated by Stolorow and Attwood (14), who conceptualized the tripartite nature of the unconscious. What they call the underlying invariant principles determine our feeling and thinking, the unreflective unconscious. I find these concepts relevant to group analysis where we work in the situation where the unreflective unconscious, akin to the preconscious, can be mobilized, recognized, and changed through the recognition and revaluation by others of those parts of the self, which – as in the Johari window – are unknown to ourselves but known to others.

What else can we learn from Kohut and Foulkes? We can learn that we work with misunderstandings, that misunderstandings are correctable, that the recognition of failures shows up idealizations and replicates Winnicott's developmental emphasis on the importance of failure in strengthening an infant's self-recognition and self-function. Foulkes left his interpretations unfinished so that they could be taken up and used by the group members for themselves. How unlike Ezriel's totalizing transference interpretations this is! Ezriel based his interpretations on a closed version of object relations theory (15). I recall my inability to make an Ezriel-type interpretation, which can only come from the therapist being a detached and unemphatic observer. I would run out of both memory and desire in attempting to make the comprehensive interpretation. Much better to base our work on Whitaker's (16) enabling and restrictive solutions.

Attachment Theory and Group Analysis

I have spoken about the culture of embeddedness, which relates to attachment theory. The principal link between attachment theory and group analysis, which originates from what at the time was the neglected work of John Bowlby; was made by Mario Marrone who organized a series of lectures and seminars with Bowlby at the Institute of Group Analysis, London. Bowlby could see the relevance of group analysis in terms of attachment theory, but was not, in my opinion, much interested in group analytic theory. In this respect, he and Foulkes were mirrors of each other. It is characteristic of originators that, to retain internal coherency, they engage in selective perception and misperception and it is left to us who follow them to enlarge their frame of reference.

Out of the body of attachment theory research I select work on coherency, mirroring, reflectivity, and mentalization. I warmly recommend the recently published book by Peter Fonagy on attachment theory and psychoanalysis (17), where he has written...
persuasively on theory of mind, mirroring, and reflection.

You will recall that the adult attachment interview differentiates between securely and insecurely attached adults through measures of their narrative coherency. Securely attached adults are those most likely to have secure children, because those children develop basic trust in caregivers, who are attentive, sensitive, and are co-participants in their development. They fulfill Kohut’s self-object functions. The term “basic trust” originates from Eric Erikson, who has always been a beacon of orientation for me, the counterpoint of Fouilles in forming my attachment to both group analysis and psychoanalysis. Fonagy revisits Erikson’s work in “Childhood and Society” (17), and shows how attachment theory can benefit from his ideas:

“The secure infant trusts the caregiver to return and “he receives and accepts” comfort from her. Insecure attachment patterns are forms that mistrust might take. Resistant infants show an inability to “accept” comfort and reassurance. Avoidant infants cope with a failure of their “mutual regulation” by withdrawing and in the extreme “closing up, refusing food and comfort, and becoming oblivious to companionship”; they “find their thumb and damn the world” (16).

By Fonagy’s opinion, Erikson suggested that mutuality was central to the achievement of basic truth. Although this may be a misprint for basic trust, I think it is a very truthful misprint. Truth, trust, virtue, and goodness are all interrelated.

Erikson (17) wrote that basic trust is transmitted across generations by “the experience of the care taking person as a coherent being, who reciprocates one’s physical and emotional needs in expectable ways and, therefore, deserves to be endowed with trust, and whose face is recognized as it recognizes”. In that short sentence, Erikson points out the importance of coherency, reciprocity, mutual mirroring, and recognition.

Mirroring, Reflectivity, and Mentalization

Let me shortly refer to mirroring, reflectivity, and mentalization (19). Human psychological development is intrinsically interwoven with dialogical processes. Infants are hard-wired to scan the environment for what they find interesting and which will respond to the infant’s gestures. Yours is the face that recognizes me and in which I can find myself. Recall how Narcissus denied others the return of their desirable glances. The infant’s grasp of the notion of self and otherness, subject and other subject, begins to differentiate as it finds pleasurable similarities and differences in interplay. Your response to me is both familiar and interestingly different, a similar gesture in a different modality. Our shared object has two faces. I begin to “see” that I and the other are both minded entities. Later, early triangulation, the Lacanian voix du pere and Abelin’s early triangulation move the mind on to tackle the complexity of mental life. I forbear here to make links to Klein’s positions, to Bion’s grid, to Grotstein’s dual track theory of the double helix of self and other. In this context, Rita Leal’s two papers on “Why group analysis works”, are valuable and accessible (20, 21).

Affect Theory

Affect theory is the center of interest in developmental psychology and neuropsychology. As Damasio shows in “Descartes Error” (22) and “the way that things feel” (23), we know ourselves through the intrinsic connection of feelings and thoughts: no thoughts without feelings, hence Descartes’ Error.

Affect regulation (24) refers to how we manage the economics of the mind; how we recognize the surges of vital feelings; our love, hate, conflicts, and feelings regarding self and others. Psychoanalysis developed an economic theory to do with instinctual stimulations, which Hartmann over-elongated, with his metapsychology of neutralization, conflict free areas, and so on. However, Kohut has made economic theory the fulcrum of his theories, as Mollon’s (13) clearly brings out. Kohut himself was very sensitive to the delicate balance of his patients’ narcissistic equilibrium, the wishes for and fears of grandiosity and idealization—the two poles of what he described as the tension arc of character.

Affect regulation for the infant depends on the parents’ ability to understand and respond sensitively to its signals. Mirroring and proto-dialogues are the ways in which the mother acts for and represents her baby’s thinking system in its earliest years. She gives back via her mirroring a manageable version of what (s)he is communicating. For this reflection to help the infant, it has to consist of a subtle combination of both mirroring and communication of a contrasting affect, which conveys to the infant a sense of being safely understood and its economy managed. An example is how we speak to a baby that is impatient for a feed, calming it, commiserating with it, and promising consummation.

If the infant has not been able to find a recognizable version of its mental states in another person’s mind, then the opportunity to acquire a symbolic representation of those states has been lost. The child begins to achieve control over its own affects through this kind of symbolization—the words and gestures that convey to the child an understanding that “you’re hungry, you’re unhappy, you’re angry with me”, or the secondary control system of words that bring it into the human community.

Aspects of Neurobiology

This secondary control system of words can be located in the function of the right hemisphere (24). From the age of two, left-brain activity takes over from the right brain and thenceforward dominates cerebral activity. But during these first two years, a rapid development and dominance of the right hemisphere coincides with a period of intense socio-affective learning, later superseded by the maturation of the linguistic left hemisphere. The right brain appears fundamental to perceiving both our own emotions and those of others. The right brain is directly involved in the processing of gaze interaction, of mirroring and sonorous interactions. Nowadays, increasing emphasis is being
laid upon the brain as the "organ of sociality", “the social brain in the society of brains” (25). The socially undeveloped and understimulated brain will present the subject with defects in processing and interpreting emotional messages, thus creating autistic islands. Foulkes long ago recognized this fact, when he wrote that, in therapy, we translate autistic symptoms into articulate language. Recall his immersion into neuropsychology from his time with Kurt Goldstein. This seems to have laid down “invariant principles” in his mind, principals that had to do with the interplay of neural and social structures.

I cannot do better than to refer to what Mollon has written on the affect regulation functions of the infant-mother dyad.

Mirroring represents synchrony of visual and gestural matching of infant and mother. Twinship is the discovery that there is another who is like myself; the infant’s perception of the other’s matching brain state, a mirroring or resonance between two partners. Ideализation is the opportunity to merge with the calm, safe other, being soothed, calmed, protected, bringing the brain state back from incoherence and over-stimulation to coherency. Though it is contestable that we perceive of a “group mind”, yet we can recognize the growth of a group’s capacity for reflection, soothing and calming, the relief of emotional distress. In the growth of answerability, there is a possibility of relief from the distress of fears of fragmental lives of others is an economic enterprise. We can paradoxically think of infants as being vitally emmeshed in relatedness with others before the time they are actually object-related.

Foulkes’s concept of the Matrix, the “common shared ground” of the group, emphasizes the “enmeshed relatedness” of the members of a group-analytic group (30).

Economic Theory

The collaboration of group members in the emotional lives of others is an economic enterprise. We invest emotional energy and empathic sensitivity and explore both individual and group processes in the common group enterprise. If the group succeeds in overcoming anti-group forces, it will develop a strong matrix, a history of all the transactions that have taken place. It is by their attendance and involvement that the members become investors in a common enterprise, an economic enterprise that builds social and emotional capital from which they are able to draw on. Indeed, the whole is greater than the parts: collectively, the group is indeed wiser, more accepting and understanding than is the internal economy of any individual participant. The dictum “trust the group” can be reinterpreted as the recognition that the group has the possibility to become a mutual trust fund for its members. Foulkes liked to write about “fellowship”, which represents the sharing within a mutual society. The early forms of insurance societies were based upon fellowship in a trade or mutual interest group. Hence, to become a fellow in a learned society is to be honored by the trust of that organization, that one is recognized as being able to fulfill and enhance its aims.

Contemporary Support for Foulkes’ Approach

The group analytic concept of the individual being constituted to a profound degree by social factors has received much encouragement from current research in child development, in a deeper study of the nature of communication and in current psychology and neurobiology. Here I shall sketch out something of what personally I have found to be important.

Ultrasound visualization of the fetus (26, 27) shows the striking continuity of pre- and post-natal psychological development, which Freud had anticipated when he wrote “there is much more continuity between intra-uterine life and earliest infancy than the impressive caesura of the act of birth would have us believe. What happens is that the child’s biological situation as fetus is replaced for it by a psychical object relation to its mother” (28). Piontelli has given striking evidence of this “continuity”, even showing that the “personality” of each of a pair of twins develops along lines evident in utero (27).

Kumin (29) persuasively argues that this should be termed a pre-object relationship, which antedates the development of the infant’s capacity to internally represent constant, differentiated object relations. The pre-object state is an archaic form of reciprocal relatedness for which the baby is pre-adapted from birth, but about which the baby cannot yet “think”. We can paradoxically think of infants as being vitally enmeshed in relatedness with others before the time they are actually object-related.

Foulkes’s concept of the Matrix, the “common shared ground” of the group, emphasizes the “enmeshed relatedness” of the members of a group-analytic group (30).

It is from this level of pre-object relatedness that each can resume early psychic development, overcoming the incompatibility of the individual in their early family matrix that had contributed to developmental arrests. Primary object relatedness and primary reciprocity are the Anlage for such features of post-natal life (31). The focus of research attention is on the exquisite sensitivity of caregiver/infant relationships (31). Close observations, with open eyes and the appropriate technical equipment, have revealed the following processes that are present both pre- and post-natally: 1) infants’ attention can be attracted by adults very soon after birth – they will imitate adult facial gestures, such as tongue protrusion, even an hour after birth; 2) imitation involves active scanning of the visual environment for what the infant finds “interesting”; 3) the most interesting things are the facial expressions and the sounds coming from fascinating adult caregivers; 4) infants are constantly and actively seeking the response of others to their own actions as well as responding to the activities of others; 5) successful completion of units of activity between infants and caregivers gives pleasure, whereas unsuccessful ones give displeasure; and 6) human activity can be conceived of as essentially “dialogical”, involving partners in mutual synchronized and interesting activities. In the absence of such activities development falters, is arrested or regresses.

These processes affect infant development in the most profound manner. They affect bonding, attachment, mentalization – the development of mind and the awareness of being in a society of persons who
are also like-minded, but also different. They affect the acquisition of social and emotional intelligence as well as cognitive development. On the neurological level, there is increasing evidence that neuronal networks forming the basis of mind are deeply affected by the early processes of the infant/caregiver relations and actions.

Through these advances we see how profoundly infant mental and emotional development is indebted to “good enough” environmental responses. Understanding these early influences is important but it also makes us aware how difficult it may be to influence such early factors by psychotherapy. We must accept the limits of our powers, but we can also see that this information can reinforce our beliefs that, as human development is so profoundly social, we may be able to reach to very basic and early levels of human nature through our group analytic work. For instance, the realms of psychosis and delinquency are opening through our group analytic work. For instance, there is increasing evidence that neuronal networks forming the basis of mind are deeply affected by the early processes of the infant/caregiver relations and actions.

Finally, I return to the something more than interpretation concept. An important paper by the Boston Group for the Study of Change, headed by Daniel Stern, outlines what is significant and effective in the psychotherapeutic encounter (1), as follows:

a) moment of meeting – a moment of meeting between parent and child opens the way to a more inclusive, more coherent, mutual regulatory system;

b) a present moment – a unit of dialogic exchange; and

c) moving along – a sequence of now moments, arriving at a kairos moment, the propitious moment from which change can emerge. The term now moment is taken from the neurophysiologist Walter Freeman, who, in his fascinating book “Societies of brains” (25), shows the brains are essentially a social community, organs reaching out for recognition and response from the other.

In these moments of meeting, which I also call moments of meaning, both partners in the enterprise recognize that something new and important is occurring that needs to be caught on the wind before it vanishes; the rare moments of absorption in the experience, the moment that leaves its mark.

The authors tell us that it is important not to offer interpretations, which are only explanations: the therapist has to do something more than the strict interpretation, for that alone will not create a new intersubjective context (1). These moments of meeting are moments of healing connection – the rhythm of connection, disconnection, pause, reconnection; connection, pause for thought and feeling, reconnecting on a new basis. These are familiar processes in group analysis, which Foulkes foresaw by his emphasis on mirroring, resonance, the primacy of communication over interpretation, the mutual processes of introjection and projection, the internalization of experience in relationships, the group as matrix of the individual’s mental life. He wrote of the role and function of the therapist as “a perceptive and creative act, like a conductor’s interpretation of the work of a composer, that the therapist is akin to a poet who finds a way to recognize and express deeper meanings, as does the poet who expresses motifs of a society” (30). In many ways we are deepening and amplifying these basic group-analytic concepts, now validated and reinforced by new knowledge of developmental processes in infancy and childhood. We can now recognize that the prose that we have always been speaking is also poetry.

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