

The Holy See: The Individual and the Group-Intersubjective Meetings

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The analytic group is a space where powerful meetings between the various selves of its members occur. These meetings have the potential to facilitate processes of mutual recognition and the development of multiple selves, on one hand, but may also lead to collapse of the potential space and experiences of destruction, on the other. Group and individual processes of recognition and destruction may be dramatic and require special coping on the part of the leader (mainly in situations of impasse), or they may be more subtle, almost unnoticeable. Both in the case of the big dramas and in the case of the little dramas, the possibility for surrender, for movement toward unfamiliar areas within one or more of the participants, is what furthers the group's development. In the current paper, I apply intersubjective concepts to group work and, more precisely, propose a way of looking at how the group and the group leader can act to expand the intersubjective space in order to enable processes of destruction and recognition to coexist without the potential space collapsing.

INTRODUCTION

The therapeutic group is a powerful potential space for the development of the group and of its members. The therapeutic group is also a place where the potential space can collapse and the group and its members not only fail to contribute to one another but also create traumatic situations for one another.

Drawing from intersubjective theory, I claim that at any moment in the therapeutic group there is movement between situations where the members are able to use the space and situations of collapse. Preventing situations of collapse is not the aim of the group, because its development depends on the movement between collapse and reinstating of the potential space. This does not mean that there are no destructive processes that negate development. Rather, the movement between destruction and development is part of the single process of expanding the emotional repertoire, both in the individual and in the group.

Movement within suitable boundaries is what creates development. What is development in the group, what enables the existence of space that is open to movement, when does the space collapse and how is it reinstated? These are the issues I address in this paper, using clinical illustrations.