UNITY IN DUALITY: THE SYNTHESIS OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Contrary to the notion that individual and group therapy tap differing psychic functions, developmental levels, or therapeutic goals, in this paper the two modalities are seen as parts of an integrated whole, to be understood via the metaphorical and symbolic communications in each; each is a holographic reflection of the whole, the two together being internally consistent. Different levels of defensive operations may be observable in each, but taken together they reflect the entirety of the patient's psyche. The group's developmental level as well as the active use of this integrative approach by the therapist are also important. Clinical illustrations are presented.

The metaphor of the god Janus is very apt. Like Janus, every individual faces simultaneously in more than one direction: inward, to a private, personal world of inner meanings and experience, and outward, to the world at large and the other individuals in it. Arlow (1969) depicts "the perceptual apparatus of the ego... operating at the same time in two different directions. One part of it looks outward, responding to the sensory stimuli of the external world of objects. The other part looks inward, reacting to a constant stream of inner stimulation" (p. 29). Part of the human paradox is the cognizance of being entwined in social groupings, from dyads to society at large, yet necessarily separate—ultimately and existentially alone.

How is this dilemma played out in treatment? Does the patient present one Janus face in the dyad and another in the group? To rephrase the question: are differing levels and facets of psychic makeup stimulated by the two modalities? Are we dealing with discrete structures in each, or are we merely observing through different lenses? Are the same underlying dynamic issues reflected in dissimilar stimulus situations, so that we address the same issues in varying ways, or are we addressing different issues in the two forms of treatment?

While numerous authors deliberate the relative merits of individual treatment, group treatment, or both, the issue of the manifestation of underlying psychic structure is not ordinarily addressed as such. Discussion is usually...
limited to their relative efficacy, or to the differences in the nature of transference or resistance manifested in each.

Authors who, like Lewin, address issues of group dynamics, do not ordinarily integrate them with, or even address, the psychodynamics of the component individuals. In the therapeutic setting, where these are addressed, there is disagreement as to whether dynamics manifested in group treatment are discretely different from those seen in individual therapy. Caligor, Fieldsteel, and Brok (1984) seem to imply that differing levels of object relations are operative in each. On the other hand, Stein (1964), in his discussion of transference in combined therapy, offers the observations that transference reactions, being different and opposed in the two modalities, can become confused; that since patients may utilize the group as a defense against transference reactions, the two forms of treatment would better be handled separately to avoid "contamination resistance"; or that, because of unresolved transference issues in individual treatment, patients may actively resist group therapy. With regard to transference, Bieber (1971) observes that "some therapists share the view that analytic transference alters when patients join a group," but specifies, "the author... does not."

My own impression is that behaviors seen in individual treatment can be understood as part of a continuum with those observed in the group setting. Various authors hold to the idea that intrapsychic events are related intrinsically to interpersonal events in the group. Agazarian and Peters (1981), for example, refer to the isomorphism between intrapsychic and interpersonal, while Whitaker and Lieberman (1964) talk about parallel group focal conflicts in the individual and the group. Foulkes and Anthony (1957) describe partly shared and partly unshared unconscious psychic material in the group. For them, the two arenas represent a single dimension, the processes of the group being merely an extension of individual dynamics. Foulkes observes in a later writing (1961) that members of a group between them, in their complex interactional network, produce a new dynamic field. This existence of group psychodynamics is... too often looked upon as something totally different from, and even antagonistic to, individual dynamics. It is said, for example, that these group- or sociodynamics are of interest to the sociologist but that their bearing on psychotherapy is non-existent or minimal; they are external, whereas psychology is concerned with psychodynamics, i.e., intrapsychic phenomena. In my view this juxtaposition of the individual and the group rests on a misunderstanding and leads to unending and insoluble pseudo-problems... psychodynamics are... rarely, if ever, confined within the boundaries of the individual but regularly include a number of interconnected persons. They are transpersonal manifestations." (p. 30, emphasis added)

No matter the particular vantage point from which we view the psychic apparatus, we observe the whole in its entirety: Its nature is essentially holographic. Levenson (1972) has described the therapy situation in the same fashion; each session represents the totality of the patient's psychic life in holographic perspective. An entire analysis, Freud (1911) observes, is required fully to understand a dream. Or, implicitly, the analysis of the dream is a duplicate in microcosm of the entire analysis. In each therapeutic encounter, the patient presents an isomorphic sampling of his or her entire psyche, whether that be an interview, a complete therapy, or a group situation. The