

What to Observe in a Group

Claudio Neri

ABSTRACT

The objectives I have set myself in this paper are to give a general idea of what a group therapist with a psychoanalytic approach observes in a therapeutic group, and to examine two areas of observation that I retain essential to my work. Different points to consider in group psychotherapy will be discussed. These include individuals, inter-personal relationships, interactions between individuals and a central object, and trans-personal phenomena. This paper will hopefully stimulate constructive dialogue between a group therapist with a psychoanalytic formation and colleagues who practice Adventure therapy, without neglecting the different theoretical standpoints that divide us.

A Methodology for Experience

Experience without theory is blind. I believe if one doesn't have a theory or a minimal hypothesis in mind, it's impossible to observe. On the other hand, theory without experience is void. I observe and I verify my hypothesis, then I build a new hypothesis on my observations; when I have a new hypothesis, I am free to observe again. This is my methodological approach that takes account of both theory and experience. The other methodological approach I use is, to combine what I observe when I watch and listen to others, and what I feel and how feelings change during that interaction. In all my reports I take note of what is happening in the group situation and what is going on inside myself, whether it be baffling or enlightening. The third point of my methodological approach is the following: cognitive factors and emotional factors contribute to form a synthesis of my observations. Among the cognitive factors, intuition and theoretical models are invaluable. Also, the elaboration of the therapist's experiences and emotions plays an important part. I would like to add that I rely on vignettes, examples and allegories to illustrate the points I am trying to get across. I realise that it diverges from a traditional scientific treatise, but my preference derives from the particular discipline I work in. Dreams, tales and fantasies make up the backbone of any group session conducted from a psychoanalytical point of view, and, in my opinion, theoretical discussions must also necessarily contain this material.

Adventure Therapy and Group Psychotherapy with a Psychoanalytical Approach

It is impossible to fully examine the similarities and the differences between adventure therapy and group psychotherapy with a psychoanalytical approach here. However, I will give brief definitions of the two disciplines in order to lay out a framework to this paper.

Adventure therapy is a relatively new field of endeavour whose activities involve the combination of physically and psychologically demanding outdoor activities and/or a remote natural setting. One of the basic principles is experiential learning. The adventure activities and associated human interactions are usually conducted in groups. The goals of each adventure therapy intervention are developed in response to client needs and each goal includes re-socialisation, treating substance abuse, giving the client a better understanding and control of their own emotional and social lives. The main idea of the practice of adventure therapy is that it involves the application of "adventure" in the service of "therapy" but each of the key terms, "adventure" and "therapy" is potentially open to a wide range of interpretation.
(Adapted from Ringer, 1999)

In defining group analytic psychotherapy, Foulkes (1964: 43) states that:

The use of the term 'group analytic psychotherapy' stresses two aspects: first of all that in its general theoretical and clinical orientation it is situated in a common territory with psychoanalysis; and second, that because of its intensity and its aims, on the level of group therapy, it occupies a position very similar to that seen in psychoanalytical psychotherapy. Therefore, it is a psychoanalytical psychotherapy that is carried out within a group, which is considered as being a unit. However, like other forms of psychotherapy, it also puts the single individual at the centre of attention.

The differences between adventure therapy and group psychotherapy with a psychoanalytical approach are, as I said before, unquestionable, but if we take a closer look we begin to see some similarities. For instance, the fundamental importance of the experience, that is both a personal and a learning experience. Another similarity is the sense of adventure that involves risk. The risk in adventure therapy is connected to a particular environment that could involve danger. Risk within group psychotherapy, is connected to revealing unknown aspects of the personality. Every person

who approaches group psychotherapy is on the brink of a transformation of the structure of the personality. The relationship with himself/herself and others undergoes change. The therapist is also involved in this “adventure”. Risk seems to be the most visible aspect that both disciplines have in common. In the future I am sure others will emerge as a result of contact and study between the two disciplines.

Four Points to Consider in Group Psychotherapy

In my opinion in order to practice group psychotherapy with a psychoanalytical approach it is necessary to observe the following four points:

- Individuals
- Inter-personal relationships
- Interactions between individuals and a central object
- Trans-personal phenomena.

I have chosen these four points for two reasons. First, the areas they refer to are easy to differentiate. Second, they embrace everything the group analyst should observe when conducting a group. The therapist moves from one point to another, trying to create links between them. It is impossible to consider them contemporaneously, nor individually, but they are components of a set. The therapist is a bit like a movie camera that zooms onto and pans, linking up the separate pieces.

Individuals

During the working progress of the group, each participant puts forward his/her own fantasy history, using different forms of expression, such as stories, dreams, behaviour, etc. All these communications contribute to the development of group activity, and at the same time are linked to previous communications, following the drift of fantasies. The group members continually refer to their fundamental themes. I often use the word fantasy in my writings, by this I mean, all that is concerned with an imaginary scenario in which the subject is present and is represented, and can be distorted by defensive processes; or, the realization of an unconscious wish. By ‘fantasy history’, I don’t mean the individuals chronological history, for instance where that person went to school, how many brothers and sisters, who the parents were, etc, but how that individual imagines him/herself during childhood days and his/her present life context.

The therapist makes an effort to understand the underlying meanings to each communication and observes how each person evolves according to the relationship he/she has established with him/herself and with the group. The therapist also observes the patient’s reaction to the therapy and notices if there is a development (or a stoppage) in the evolution of the personality. By development, I mean the person gradually becoming more aware of vital and instinctual aspects of his/her personality, which were hidden or repressed. Little by little, a life project starts to emerge. This development is not a linear one, but it proceeds in starts and stops.

Listening to individuals in a group is similar to listening to certain pieces of music, such as ‘*Peter and the Wolf*’. Prokofiev's work is composed in such a way that the listener can hear the timbre and the sound of a single instrument and the gradual development of the instrument’s musical phrase. Similarly, the therapist learns to recognise the characteristic way of expression of the individuals in the group. It is important that the therapist does not always consider the expressions of the participants as signs of pathology, but more often as their particular way of expressing themselves. The recognition of each individual also functions as an antidote to transformation of the group into a mass. Tocqueville (1835-1840) reminds us that, "a group cannot be free if its members are not free". The therapist pays attention not only to the participants of the group who are speaking, but in particular to those who are unable to express themselves in words. By joining together short phrases, facial expressions and fragments of feeling and thought, the therapist can help to bring out a capacity of being their ordinary selves, which these patients - who may be confused or whose identity is multifaceted - do not possess, or only potentially possess. The therapist’s help could be compared to the relationship between a father and a son who has to decide which university faculty to enter. The father thinks: "my son ought to become an engineer". This could have two outcomes. Either the son could identify himself in his father’s image by choosing the faculty of Engineering, or else he could reject his father’s proposal. Even if he chooses the latter, his self-esteem is strengthened by his father’s interest, providing him with a cognitive point of reference and orientation, and enabling him to see himself as a whole person.

Interpersonal Relationships

The therapist observes the relationships that develop within the group. Every relationship is made up of two layers. One layer is the current or present relationship. The other, which could be compared to a scent, is the infant relationship.¹ In any relationship, for instance between two friends, rivalry, solidarity, etc., can be seen. Psychoanalysis

perceives these qualities, not only in the present human relationship, but also in the childhood relationships underlying the present ones. All relationships are imbued with affective contents, which can be traced back to previous situations. For example, if uneasiness and protest are expressed, the therapist must appraise whether these manifestations are a demand for affective warmth (the transference of a mother image), or a demand for freedom of thought (an expression of an Oedipal or paternal transference). However, I don't agree in using the transference concept in groups. The extrapolation of theoretical constructions from the world of traditional (dual) psychoanalysis to the group is always problematic, and can cause confusion and distract attention from what the group essentially needs. Transference phenomena are central to the analytic couple situation, whereas other phenomena relating to the field are specific to the group.

There is also another reason why I avoid using the transference concept in groups. It is certainly true that - in the group setting - there is an affective and fantasy investment onto the therapist that could be likened to transference. Since this occurs within the group it must be dealt with as a problem of the group situation. I might add that the most effective interventions of the group therapist are not those that interpret the nature of interpersonal relationships (such as transference), but those that deal with the field forces present at that moment. Returning to the previous example, for instance, if a member is particularly aggressive with the therapist I would prefer not to treat this phenomenon as an Oedipal problem. Rather, I would see the aggressive behaviour as a change in the group atmosphere encouraging new creative possibilities. In other words the aggressive behaviour interrupts an atmosphere of dependence that is restricting the possibilities of expression. Let's consider another aspect of interpersonal relationships. Often a member perceives the feelings of a fellow member, which he/she is unaware of. These perceptions can be accurate or distorted. If the perceptions are distorted, they are accompanied by weighty identifications and intense affective investment. The background atmosphere of the group plays an important part in these dynamics. If tolerance and friendliness prevail in the group then correct perception prevails too, but this is not the case if the atmosphere is persecutory.²

Foulkes (1964) uses the term "resonance", to describe the capacity of the members to comprehend emotions and experiences within the group. He takes "resonance" from physics, as a metaphor and as a model. A definition of resonance follows. Two or more objects - e.g. two violin strings - can be set vibrating on a frequency that is distant from their own, or from their natural frequencies. The effect remains weak but increases as the excitant frequency approaches the natural one and reaches wide amplitude of vibration (amplitude of resonance). When it reaches one of the natural frequencies (resonance frequency), the system is then said to be "in resonance". Normal emotional contact in the group corresponds to resonance at a long distance from natural frequencies. However, true resonance between two or more people (system in resonance) comes about when a particular theme, fantasy or sentiment is expressed. Resonance often requires a certain "working through". For example, a member of the group can have a dream that regards another member. Just as a mother bird pre-digests food for her young, he or she adopts the emotional situation of a companion who is not capable of "working through" in that particular moment. Resonance also takes place when associative and "working through" chains are created by the group, involving the majority of the group members.

Interactions Between Individuals and a Central Object

First, I will refer to the chain of associations, a specific procedure of group therapy with a psychoanalytical approach, then I will go on to illustrate the interactions between individuals and a central object. Free association is an integral part of psychoanalytical technique used in the dual analysis to gain access to the unconscious levels of the mind. The patient communicates his/her thoughts regarding a dream or an episode, which becomes a free-floating stream of associations and takes up as much time as he/she wishes. This technique cannot be used extensively in the group setting for obvious reasons: the other members' attention would stray. However, on certain occasions the group during its characteristic free flowing discussions come close to expressing free associations. These discussions can lead to the emergence of a chain activity, to which each member contributes a personal link, by adding a fantasy, a comment or a memory. The group chain of associations is where fantasies of individual participants can be expressed and fantasies of the group as a whole. For example, a chain of associations can express both an individual's desires and hopes and shared messiahs like the fantasy of a new world.

Just as the associative chain elucidates one aspect of group communication, another aspect may be represented by the star-shaped image. Here the members of the group revolve around a common object, which is seen from different points of view. All the members are linked to a central point that acts as a group connector. I refer to this object as a group connector, because it galvanizes the attention of all the members, each one being connected to the other by this common object. The common object may be an event that the group is already conscious of, like a fantasy or an emotion, or maybe it is unclear or even unidentified. This reminds me of a Sufi story.

Many years ago, there was a country where no one had ever seen an elephant. The King of India, for political reasons wanted to make an alliance with the king of that country, so he sent him an elephant as a gift. It arrived at night and was immediately enclosed in a pavilion in the embassy garden.

The people's curiosity was great, and in order to see what an elephant looked like, four of the bravest men decided to creep secretly into the pavilion while it was dark. So as not to be found out, they did not take a lantern with them, but simply touched the animal, feeling it carefully and then quickly ran back to their friends who were waiting for them impatiently.

'This is what an elephant is like,' said the first, who had touched a foot, 'it is like a round column.' But the second, who had touched its trunk, retorted, 'Not at all; it is like a thick rope, very thick and very long.'

The third, who had carefully felt one of the elephant's ears, assured them that the animal was like a great fan, and the fourth, who had examined the tail, asserted that at the end of the day the elephant was just like a pig's tail, but much higher up and rougher".

(Mandel, 1992: pp.26-27)

The story of the 'Elephant in the Dark' urges us not to speak about things without having a global view of them. However, as in many Sufi stories, another reading is possible. We can imagine the four adventurers discussing excitedly what they felt and thought when they touched the elephant, surrounded by a crowd of eager listeners adding their own opinions and conjectures. In my opinion the story depicts the idea of the star-shaped group, where the different vertices contribute to the overall knowledge of the group enriching the single components. The participants of a group find themselves in a similar situation to the brave men who ventured into the compound, without a light. They tend to perceive a common fantasy, but it is not clear, they cannot distinguish its meaning. They share their different perceptions of it, leading to a greater understanding of the whole.

Trans-Personal Phenomena

The last point I want to discuss is transpersonal phenomena. The word "transpersonal" means literally beyond the individual, ("trans": beyond, "personal": the individual.) Ninety years ago a transpersonal approach to the psyche appeared in studies by William James, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow and Roberto Assagioli. The transpersonal psychotherapy studied transcendent states of consciousness and aimed at developing the highest spiritual and mental capacity of the individual. (Batista, 1996; Kasparow & Scotton, 1999). I will not refer to this psychotherapy in this paper, nor use the term in that sense. By transpersonal phenomena I mean the diminishing of ego boundaries in the group, thus creating:

- Basic assumptions
- Atmosphere
- Medium.

Basic assumptions, atmosphere and medium tend to overlap in the clinical situation of group psychotherapy, but I will describe them individually.

Basic Assumptions

In 1991, Bion's daughter Parthenope Bion Talamo wrote:

In a broad outline of Bion's theory [...] he declares that the attempts made by human beings united in a group to develop creative conduct (in whatever field may be disturbed and even completely broken off by the emergence of thoughts and emotions [which are] rooted in unconscious fantasies concerning the "true" motives for the foundation of the group.

There are three main classes into which these fantasies fall. 1) "religious", the fantasy of depending totally on an absolute and dominant figure. 2) that of "coupling" according to which the group is said to be formed with the sole aim of reproduction, a class which merges into the religious one when the product of the mating, whether it be a person or an idea, is seen as a Messiah who is still to come. 3) Fight/flight, a basic fantasy where the group unites in order to deal exclusively with its own preservation, and this depends exclusively on attacking the enemy in mass or fleeing from it. (Bion Talamo, 1991: pp. 4-5)

The observations on basic assumptions made by Bion during his lifetime research on groups, tells us above all that the members perceive everything that takes place in the group. Basic assumptions are a way of perceiving. They are like glasses of different colours. If you wear "coupling basic assumption glasses", you see the world coloured with hope and joy. If your glasses are "fight-flight glasses", you see it coloured with anger and persecution. What is more important, you are not the only person who sees things that way, all the members of your group will do so too. It is a collective phenomenon, not an individual one. Bion describes this phenomenon without giving any explanation to it. We can only presume that basic assumptions are part of the heritage of people.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of the group is a consequence of the emotional and physical experiences of the participants of the group. By a merging effect, (syn-aesthesia) these emotional and physical experiences tend to unite in a flexible ensemble that makes up the atmosphere of the group. Fritz Redl (1942:573-6) defines it as the "quality of the basic feeling that underlies the life of a group, the sum of the emotions of each individual that encounters others, work, the institution, the group as a unit and the external world". In Metter's (1992) latest book there is a particularly fine image that renders the idea of atmosphere in groups. Metter writes that in certain environments - public lavatories, breweries, or train stations - a characteristic odour accumulates; even when the rooms have been aired or cleaned, the odour tends to linger on in the air. Thus, going into certain groups, we can feel a sense of longstanding rancour, or gloom and boredom that cannot be eradicated, whilst in others a sense of mental openness and lightness can be felt. The group produces certain "atmospheres", and these cannot be modified or easily transformed. Furthermore, in a group there are also transient and long lasting atmospheres.

Medium

McLuhan (1977) states that the message is the media. Communication made through the media is deeply influenced by it. Sometimes the medium surpasses the message. Television is a medium. The discotheque is also a medium; it conveys a sense of excitement and a different perception of oneself from normal life, specially for someone who doesn't go there often. The group situation is a medium. A person approaching a group for the first time is often confronted by a sense of fear and de-personalization. The therapist must be ready to face this situation.

The introduction of a new medium or a change in an already known medium - as I said before - modifies the perception of those who are experiencing it. The impact of medium changes with the passage of time and varies proportionally to the amount and speed of change. For example a light dimming in a room is a slow change in the medium and easy to adjust to. Sudden darkness results in a cloudy and almost anaesthetised perceptive relationship to the medium, (which can even be totally excluded from consciousness). A sense of uneasiness sets in. In a group the physical or somatic presence of all the members is an important element of the medium. If a member is missing (an empty seat), the absence modifies the setting, and an adequate "working through" is necessary, to re-establish communication. An example of a change in the medium is seen in a true story from New York (Pribram, 1987, p.84 and 1991) **THERE IS ONLY 1991 IN REF LIST .. SUGGEST OMIT 1987 OR INLCUDE IN REF. LIST ... ALSO IS THIS A DIRECT QUOTE --- NEED PAGE NO IF IT IS).**

The police noticed an increase in night calls coming from a certain suburb. These calls (reporting burglary, rape, gas leaks, etc.) were without foundation. After further study, it was seen that the calls for help were concentrated within three or four time-slots during the night. Finally, a plausible explanation was found: the times of the calls coincided with underground trains that had been cancelled from the usual time-table. The deafening silence was the cause of all the alarm.

This story clearly illustrates how the change in a medium (the running of the underground trains) modified the setting of the nocturnal habits of the population. As in a group, a missing person modifies its setting and necessitates adjustment.

Techniques for Dealing with Trans-Personal Phenomena

It is not easy to detect the effects of the medium and basic assumptions as they are disguised in the group environment. According to McLuhan (1977), the artist is able to look around, rather than look backwards or forwards. The therapist develops an "artistic side" to his personality in order to recognize transpersonal phenomena, which are not so easily detected by a "rational mind". To illustrate this point, I shall tell a story written by I. Turgenev (1882, 84-85) **NEED PAGE NO.**), when he was an old man. Turgenev had been invited by a friend to visit him on his estate. His interlocutor using a medium made up of pity, arrogance and grandeur managed to drive him into a frame of mind ranging from acquiescence to outright rebellion. The story tells how he succeeded in resisting the effects of the medium, gaining a new perspective.

I received a letter from an old university companion, a rich aristocratic land owner, inviting me to his estate. I already knew that he was ill, almost blind, and semi-paralysed ... When I arrived I met him in one of the avenues of his enormous park. He was wrapped up in fur – even though it was summer – sitting in a small wheelchair pushed by two servants dressed in rich liveries. He was humped and sinuous and seemed worn-out, with a green parasol protecting his eyes.

- Welcome - he said with sepulchral voice - to my hereditary property, to the shade of my trees!
A mighty, millennial oak opened above his head, like an ample curtain,
And I thought: "Oh millennial giant, are you listening to what he is saying? A half-dead worm, which crawls to your roots, is calling you: his tree!"

But then: a light wind, like a wave, arose and crossed the thick foliage of the giant, with a rustle ... It seemed to me that the old oak was responding to my thought and to the boastfulness of the sick man, with silent and kindly laughter.

Turgenev, by shrugging off the physical decadence and arrogance of his old friend, avoided looking “backwards and forwards”. His artistic temperament enabled him to “look around”, catching the rustle of the old oak’s foliage in the wind thus perceiving the curious message. The therapist tries to develop a capacity to perceive feelings, colours and odours concealed in the medium, remembering that feelings and odours are only perceived when one “looks around”. I learned this early on in life from a childhood experience, which I will describe in this vignette:

My nanny was a Polish lady, who lived in Rome, in exile. At a certain time of year, she used to cry. I realised later that she cried when the lime trees came into flower. There was an abundance of these trees in her hometown in Poland. Up until that time I had never noticed the scent of lime trees in Rome, because these trees are uncommon and not very popular. Now I am aware of the presence of these trees and I’ve learnt to recognise the sweet and pervasive scent in the complex and confused urban environment.

The affect for my Polish nanny made me aware of her homesickness for the first time and awakened me to the scent of the lime-trees again for the first time in the traffic- ridden Roman streets. Likewise in a group, the therapist develops the capacity to identify a sentiment among many others in the medium of the group.

Conclusion: Inter-relationship and Synthesis

In conclusion, having examined the four main points that I retain fundamental for the conduct of group therapy with a psychoanalytical approach, I would like to clarify the inter-relationship between these different areas and show how the therapist can utilize the observations.³ Everything the therapist observes regarding individuals, interpersonal relationships, interactions between individuals and a central object, and transpersonal phenomena, goes to form a synthesis that provides a wider and more general meaning as to what is happening in a group, and more important, the difficulty that group is facing, and what can be done to actuate a transformation. Here there is an analogy with Gestalt psychology that in its beginnings sought to explain perceptions in terms of forms (*gestalts*). It stated that when perception reaches a point of distinguishing a whole form from what had been seen up to then as sparse elements, it is the whole form that commands perception. This theory was proved in different experiments on perception. For instance, two lines on a sheet of paper can be perceived either as a vase or as two profiles facing each other. Likewise the single observations that the therapist makes in a group go to form a synthesis. These observations could be: the mood of one of the participants; the type of relationship two participants have between themselves; tension towards an object with certain characteristics, for instance interest or fear; the atmosphere in the group; and what basic assumption is dominating at that moment. All these observations flow into a general idea of the problem or the aim expressed by the group as a whole. When the therapist has to face difficulties in a group, the first question that comes to mind is, “how can my observations produce an effect or a change, even if the outcome is unforeseeable?” In formulating the synthesis of his/her observations the therapist is helped if he/she concentrates on the obstacle or difficulty, examining the nature of the anxiety that is impeding the progress of the group. Once the therapist has comprehended this synthesis, then the single problems may be faced in a new light, helping to contribute to a transformation in the group.

ENDNOTES

¹ Here I am referring to the characteristic psychoanalytic model of the relationship. Psychoanalytical theories state the importance of past experiences and how they influence present behaviour, values and beliefs. This can be summarized in a Latin saying: “*In puero homo*” meaning, in the child lies the future man.

² Here I am not referring directly to a persecutory atmosphere, but to the effect that any atmosphere (e.g. the persecutory one) has on perception. Naturally the therapist must try to resolve a persecutory atmosphere, using reconciliatory work or an other procedure, but the point I am making is a different one, it has to do with the perception and how it is distorted by persecution.

³ At this point, I would like to recall another problem that should not be overlooked when the therapist makes his intervention. There is a question that the members never ask out loud, but nevertheless is probably on their minds: “How can you back up what you are saying?” I believe accurate observations made by the therapist provide sufficient evidence to answer that question.

References

- Battista, J.R. (1996). Abraham Maslow and Roberto Assagioli: Pioneers of transpersonal psychology. In B.W. Scotton, A.B. Chinen, & J.R. Battista J.R. (Eds.), *Textbook of transpersonal psychiatry and psychology* (pp 52-61). New York: Basic Books.
- Bion, W.R. (1961). *Experiences in groups*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bion Talamo, P. (1991). *Aggressività, bellicosità, belligeranza*. Unpublished.
- Foulkes, S.H. (1948). *Introduction to group-analytic psychotherapy: Studies in the social integration of individuals and groups*. London: Heinemann.
- Foulkes, S.H. (1964). *Therapeutic group analysis*. London: Karnac Books.
- Kaes, R. (1994). *La parole et le lien. Processus associatifs dans les groupes*. Paris: Dunod.
- Kasparow, M.C., & Scotton, B.C. (1999). A review of transpersonal theory and its application to the practice of psychotherapy. *The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research*. 8(1):12-24.
- Mandel, G. (1992). *Saggezza islamica. Le novelle dei Sufi..* Edizioni paoline, Milano.
- McLuhan, M. (with Fiore, Q.) (1967). *The medium is the message. An inventory of effects*. New York: Bantam Books.
- McLuhan, M. (1977). *D’oeil à l’oreille*. Ed. Hurtubise Hmh, L.tée, Montréal, Québec.
- Metter, I. (1992). *Rodoslovnaja*. (Italian translation: *Genealogia*. Einaudi, Torino, 1994).
- *** Michael, T.A. (1998). The use of dreams in system-centred theory. In W.G. Lawrence (Ed.), *Social dream at work*. **NEED PAGE NO’ OF CHAPTERS** (4th Chapter: pp.59-68). London: Karnac Books.
- Neri, C. (1998 **IS THIS 1995 OR 1998**). *Group*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Pribram, K.H. (1987). Quoted according to, Bruni, A., & Nebbiosi, G. (1987). Colloquio con K. Pribram. *Gruppo e Funzione Analitica*, 3 (1): 79-90.
- Pribram, K.H. (1991). *Brain and perception: Holonomy and structure in figural processing*. Hillside: LFA.
- Redl, F. (1942). Group, emotion and leadership. *Psychiatry*, V.
- Ringer, M. (1999). Announcement of the Second International Adventure Therapy Conference.
<http://www.erlebnispaedagogik.de/iatc/index.html>.
- Tocqueville de, A. (1835-1840). *Democracy in America*. http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html.
- Turgenev, I.S. (1882). *Dream tales and prose poems*. New Hampshire, US: Ayer Co. Publishers.

Author Biography

Claudio Neri, MD, is full Professor of “La Sapienza”, University of Rome and visiting Professor of Université Lumière–Lyon 2, France. He is a Fellow of the International Psychoanalytical Association and has been Training Analyst with the Società Psicoanalitica Italiana for many years. He was head of the Group Psychotherapy Service at the external Unit of the Psychiatry Institute of Rome and was also Consultant at the Psychiatric and Pedagogical Service for the Municipality of the city of Rome. Furthermore, he was Supervisor of the Group Psychotherapy Service of the Public Mental Health Centre, Rome. Among his current positions, he is Editor of the series “Prospettive della ricerca psicoanalitica” at the Borla Publishers and of the journal “Funzione Gamma”. He has published more than a hundred papers internationally and several books, of which *Group* (1998) published by Jessica Kingsley, London and Philadelphia, has been translated into Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Claudio Neri neric@iol.it cav.darpino@mclink.it