



A walk from trauma to thriving and joy

The Matrix of Bonding Psychotherapy

From the origins to a comparison
with two group analytic psychotherapies

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The Matrix of Bonding Psychotherapy

PART 1

- **The ROOTS of BONDING PSYCHOTHERAPY**
- **WHY?**

From the roots to the fruits CHECK

- ▶ The importance of promoting the diffusion of Bonding Psychotherapy requires that its Matrix and its constituent elements be clearly identified, shared among the members of the International BP Society and reworked to encourage the development and new applications of the therapeutic method
- ▶ To understand potential, evolution & limits of each root
- ▶ To recognize their influences, overlaps & contrasts
- ▶ **BECAUSE**
- ▶ From «Primary Matrix»
- ▶ Move to «Dynamic Matrix»

From the roots to the fruits

- ▶ **Daniel Casriel (1924-1983)**
- ▶ Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst
- ▶ Past president of the American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians and founder of Daytop treatment centers
- ▶ Trained in psycho-analysis for 7 years with Kardiner, one of the last living persons analyzed by Freud himself → **PSYCHOANALITIC ROOT**
- ▶ In 1962, contact with Synanon a therapeutic community for the rehabilitation of drug addicts → **ENCOUNTER GROUPS ROOT**

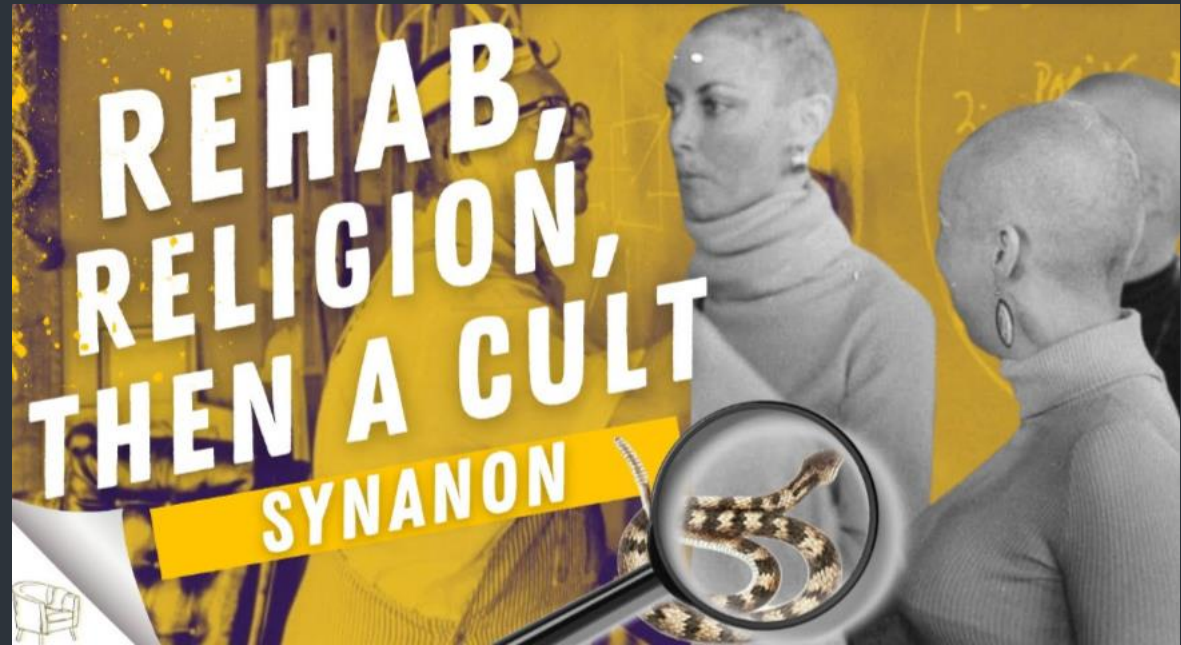


BP MATRIX AND ENCOUNTER GROUPS

- ▶ The Encounter Groups can be included in the broader social phenomenon known as the "*Human Potential Movement*", connected to the cultural revolution of the 1960s, which encouraged the free expression of the human being in all its forms.
- ▶ Synanon «Games» were part of the broader context of the **Encounter Groups movement**, which had an exponential development in the 1960s and an equally rapid decline since the 1970s.
- ▶ **WHAT CAUSED THE DECLINE:?**
- ▶ **lack of systematic research on the long-term outcomes of treatments**
- ▶ **growing evidence of risks for human health, especially for mental breakdowns and casualties caused by extreme levels of emotional exposure in Encounter groups and marathons**
- ▶ **more generally a transformation of the Human Potential Movement into other social phenomena → need of intense group experiences about topics of "education or information, which are less interesting to their feelings than to values and beliefs" (Weigel, 2002, p.194).**

Synanon's dramatic evolution

- ▶ Synanon:
- ▶ *“some people will tell you it saved their life, some say it was a social experiment.... At its core, it was a self-help rehab program that turned into a religion and then a violent cult”*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTxjLcmWV8Y>

→ BP MATRIX AND ENCOUNTER GROUPS

→ Some elements from Synanon and its "Games"

1. Social Movement
2. Use of **deep emotional release** through expressing feelings
3. Emphasis on **confrontation of self-destructive behavior**
4. Extended group → Marathon

↳ **main structure** → Extended group process with various intervention

↳ **screaming exercise**, as well as a focused process designed to change pathological behavior & thinking (**Attitude work**).

Casriel and some RiSKS of THIS ROOT

- ▶ *«The dangers and limits of the attack-encounter method worried me greatly... At Synanon there was a twenty-four-hour-a-day, highly regulated, work oriented therapeutic environment. I could not recreate such a community for my patients. There was no system for repairing possible damage to self-esteem caused by group attacks, no way to watch over patients after they had left a group session" (Casriel, 1972, pg. 52)*
- ▶ the confrontative interventions gradually replaced by experiential interventions for elaboration of emotions through expressive dynamics

Casriel and some RiSKS of THIS ROOT

- ▶ *“Running marathons this way has lost some of that giddy joy we felt after a 30-hour sessions. Many people had never experienced that kind of bondedness before, and a taste of it certainly gave them something to reach for again. Actually, our current marathons haven’t really lost that sense of bondedness.*
- ▶ ***Instead, they have cut into the intoxication which, I found, was often misleading.*** *People would come into group after a marathon hopelessly depressed, because all the good feelings had disappeared. They felt robbed and distrustful of the whole process...*
- ▶ ***The truth is, no one can maintain such joy continually. No one should expect such a “high” out in the real world all the time. These people had expected the good feelings to remain magically. The reality is that life is full of ups and downs. What one needs is a mature sense of self as a person capable of maximum choice about feelings, attitudes, and behavior within the realistic framework of the day-to-day world.***
- ▶ ***To gain that sense of self requires the kind of hard work which our current techniques demand”*** (Ibidem, p. 239).

Casriel and some RiSKS of THIS ROOT

Casriel had foreseen that

- ▶ participation in his groups would be preceded by a motivational, anamnestic and personality assessment interview
- ▶ a person included in the weekly group therapy program could participate in a marathon session, characterized by a process of 16 hours, after an evaluation of a few months
- ▶ those participants should engage in "post-marathon groups" for at least 12 weeks (Ibidem, pp. 356-357).

→ BP MATRIX & PSYCHOANALITIC ROOT

→ Various elements from Psychoanalytic root

1. the reference to the "historical" and family experiences of group members as constitutive elements of their intrapsychic dimension and the structuring of defenses;

2. the use of interpretive interventions to promote understanding of relational processes; to give an example, Casriel reports one of his intersubjective interpretative interventions within a group:

↳ **Casriel:** «Also, I bet that between you and your parents there was an agreement never to get angry with each other" (Casriel , 1972, p. 60)

3. work on the unconscious, as the therapeutic process favors the emergence of projective and transference aspects among group members, and the awareness of split or repressed parts

↳ **Casriel:** "If you're mad at your mother, why don't you get mad at her? **Imagine that she is sitting in the middle of the room.** Tell her you're angry!" (Ibidem, p. 56)



→ BP MATRIX & PSYCHOANALITIC ROOT

- ↳ Attention to unconscious intrapsychic conflicts, originating in the interpersonal context of a family and at an intergenerational level, **the so-called Matrix**, from which BP develops a theory of basic needs (Stauss, 2006, chapter 2)
- ↳ Attention to the **interpersonal dynamics that generate dysfunctional relational patterns**; hence the work on implicit memories and the dissociated areas typical of the **unrepressed unconscious** (Craparo, 2017, pp. 48-49)
- ↳ transformation of internalized imprinting of Self and Self with the Other (*Projection-Trasferenza & Counter-Transference – Enactment*)
- ↳ healing power found in the fulfillment of the basic need that humans have for **emotional closeness** (bonding): i.e. **“bonding exercise”** (Regression)

→ BP MATRIX & PSYCHOANALITIC ROOT

- ▶ **Since the beginning, Casriel worked with people suffering of serious character disorders and drug addictions, therefore with subjects with pathological dependence, often inserted in a borderline personality organization, with antisocial tendencies, and with possible traumatic components such as consequences of traumatic events or evolutionary traumas**
- ▶ The Bonding method is based on the primary elements of the caregiving relationship which represent the precursors of attachment (Stauss , 2006, p. 19), i.e. physical closeness and emotional openness between two relational partners: these elements which characterize Bonding technique allow direct access to repressed or dissociated experiences and can encourage their rework through a **chain of emotional and bodily associations** (images, sounds, posture and skin stimulation, etc.)
- ▶ **Bottom up process, from emotion/body to mind**
 - ↳ «Bonding on the mat» is an EVOLUTION of the ANALYTIC COUCH?



The Matrix of Bonding Psychotherapy

PART 2

- **A COMPARISON with GROUP-ANALYSIS
and INDIVIDUATIVE GROUP ANALYTIC
PSYCHODRAMA**

3 group psychotherapies

Group-analysis

- Group psychotherapy developed from psychoanalysis by Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst S.H. Foulkes in the 1940s

Individuative Analytical Psychodrama

- Group psychotherapy combining Psychiatrist Moreno's classical Psychodrama with Jung's Analytical Psychology

Bonding Psychotherapy

- Group psychotherapy developed in the 1960s and 70s by the American Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst Daniel Casriel

Different Features

Group-analysis

- ▶ Group analysis is a form of **psychotherapy through the group** carried out by the group and through the group. This means that:
 - the **group as a whole** is at the center of the therapy
 - it's focused as "structure, process and content"
 - the final object is the single member
 - 5 levels of communication

Individuative Group Analytic Psychodrama

- ▶ Individual analysis in group
- ▶ The dream is like a drama in which the dreamer is an actor, director, author, audience and theatre critic

Bonding Psychotherapy

- ▶ Individual therapy in group
- ▶ Individual focus on bodily states and emotions
- ▶ Relational focus on behaviours, emotions and attitudes
- ▶ Co-regulation of emotions

SOME COMMON ASPECTS

► Rules of the Setting

- Confidentiality
- Abstinence
- No violence

► Dynamic Matrix

- Possible to reactivate the dynamics of the primary matrix (Gasca, 2002, p. 73) of each subject and also follow the dynamics of the wider "network"

► Major phases in a therapeutic process (Gasca, 2002)

- **Destructuring phase:** group is "Other" than daily life
- **Transitional phase:** acting in the change process
- **Re-aggregation phase:** rituals of conclusion

► Internal scene

- *"the group is a sort of model of the psychic structure in which dynamic processes are personified and dramatically represented"* (Foulkes, in Pisani, 2000, p. 77).

► Therapeutic factors

- *Resonance and Mirroring* (Gasca, 2002, p. 104). These therapeutic factors create a path of recognition of "oneself through the reaction it causes in others and in the image that is returned to them" (Pisani, 2000, p. 71) ff)

SOME DIFFERENCES: THERAPEUTIC FACTORS

FOCUS ON: «**Corrective Recapitulation of the primary family group**», which is the place of origin of the attitudes, and the so-called «**Ego training in action**» (Pisani, 2000, p.34).

Group-analysis

- It's activation and rework is implicit and not directly activated

Individuative Analytical Psychodrama

- It may be activated intentionally and reworked «playing» one or more scenes

Bonding Psychotherapy

- It's often activated through the emotional work in Bonding exercise and more often in Attitude work

THE INTERNAL «SCENE»

- ▶ Foulkes state: "*the group is a sort of model of the psychic structure in which dynamic processes are personified and dramatically represented*" (Pisani, 2000, p. 77)
- ▶ "*the enacted representation of significant events, unlike that consisting of a simple story, reproduces, even if in a significant and reduced way, the essential traits of the verbal, mimic, gestural, spatial, temporal and relational structure; this involves the actual presentification of the scene in question, that is, the possibility of reliving it, as if everything were happening again, there in a group*" (Gasca, 2002, p. 26).

SOME DIFFERENCES: SETTING

Group-analysis

➤ Small Ongoing Group

- from 3 to 8/10 p.
- 1 & ½ hour - weekly

➤ Medium Group

- from 10 to 25/30 p.

➤ Large Group

- Over 25/30 p.

Individuative Group

Analytic Psychodrama

➤ Ongoing group

- From 6 to 30 p.
- 3 Hours - every 2 weeks

➤ Workshops

- From 6 to 30 p.
- 4-6 Hours

Bonding

Psychotherapy

➤ Ongoing Group

- From 8 to 14 p.
- 4 hours – every 1/2 weeks

➤ 1/2 Day - Daily groups

- From 8 to 14 p.
- 4/8 hours – 2/4 weeks

➤ Workshops

- From 10 to 30/40 p.
- 2/3/4 days -

SAME PARTICIPANTS

SOME DIFFERENCES: PROCESS

Group-analysis

- ▶ No Bi-modal setting
- ▶ *«there is freely fluctuating verbal communication, taken to an extreme point; there is the greatest reduction in censorship with respect to the content of contributions and the expression of personal and interpersonal feelings» (Foulkes, 1969, p. 161).*
- ▶ *«Unconscious interpretation»* by participants

Individuative Group

Analitic Psychodrama

- ▶ No Bi-modal setting
- ▶ Warm-up exercises
- ▶ “To play a game”
→ to represent one or more dreams or memories and assume different roles
- ▶ “Reading” of the process

Bonding

Psychotherapy

- ▶ Individual setting +
- ▶ A variety of group settings:
 - Sharing: similar to "freely floating" communication;
 - Activating exercises
 - Expressive and regressive dynamics in pairs (Bonding) and in circle (Attitude), also with the construction of projective dynamics

SOME DIFFERENCES: THERAPIST

Group-analysis

- ▶ Takes a little directive role, so as to become the group's conductor (as in music) rather than its director.
- ▶ Moves from FIGURE to BACK-GROUND POSITION (Gestalt)
- ▶ The co-therapist is a silent OBSERVER

Individuative Group

Analitic Psychodrama

- ▶ Takes an active position in the construction of the various scenes
- ▶ Can DOUBLE the patient
- ▶ The co-therapist is an OBSERVER that gives a final interpretation

Bonding

Psychotherapy

- ▶ Leads the group in all activities → **As a Mentor**
- ▶ Promotes and lives emotional openness and physical closeness
- ▶ Accompanies: ***“does not push anyone anywhere”***
- ▶ Can intervene both with the voice and with the body (hugging, co-regulation of emotions)

SOME DIFFERENCES: BODY STATES

Group-analysis

- Levels fo communication
 - a) Current level: conscious communication
 - (b) Transference level: level of family roles, rivalry, struggle for dominance and status, sexual tensions.
 - (c) Projection level: group members represent part of self, inner object relations
 - (d) **Corporal level: symptoms and physical illness**
 - (e) Collective unconscious: C.F. Jung, archetypes,
- **Top-down therapy**

Individuative Group

Analitic Psychodrama

- Psychodrama is **ACTION**, it is not acting-out: entering into the Roles, **experiencing one's own body in action and in relationship**; experiencing emotions and feelings of loss of boundaries, of one's identity, of encountering unconscious aspects
- **Bottom up-therapy**

Bonding

Psychotherapy

- the Object "*body of the Other*" acts as a Self-object, warm, empathetic, emotionally responsive in an implicit way: tender hug, synchronized breathing, heartbeat, etc
- **The «body» works as a personification of something that may have been missing**
- **Bottom up-therapy**

Examples of emotional work in BP

▶ **Activation of Internal Scenes**

- ▶ *"Already in the group in the afternoon I felt like I was at school, the fear of being put in the center"*

▶ **Emotional Corrective Experience**

- ▶ *"I've never felt hugs, I've never felt a fuck. As if others are beasts, not human beings"*

▶ **Pleasure and vitality**

- ▶ *"I felt a sense of life and great physical and mental pleasure while I was able to externalize some of my feelings and emotions"*

▶ **Affirm needs**

- ▶ *"I need to feel love. I feel that I am worth nothing, useless. I need to feel important: I've never felt important to someone, I'm not worth a fuck..."*

▶ **Expression of emotions and self-perception**

- ▶ *"With more strength and clarity I felt so much anger, I saw that child who never felt listened to and who inside his home never felt protected... I felt guilty, at fault, wrong, wrong. While I was working I felt a block that did not allow me to completely release all my anger and pain"*

A DYNAMIC MATRIX FOR THERAPY

**THE USE OF VOICE:
EMOTIONAL
ACTIVATION**

**THE IMPACT OF THE
BODY:
HUG &
CO-REGULATION**

**BONDING ON THE
MATTRESS:
FREE
ASSOCIATIONS**

**THE ROLE OF THE
THERAPIST:
SELF-OBJECT**

**THE LEVELS OF
EMOTIONAL
EXPRESSION:
ENACTMENT**

**ACCESS CRITERIA:
PERSONALITY
STRUCTURE
TIMING**

BONDING *PROCESS* PSYCHOTHERAPY?

- ▶ **Being a BP therapist** therefore requires the ability to manage:
 - a variety of group settings, with the ability to circulate "freely floating" communication; to activate, direct and manage expressive and regressive dynamics in pairs and in circles, also with the construction of psychodramatic scenography;
 - an individual setting in which to evaluate the personality of the participants, define the type of work to be carried out in the group and to support, deepen and integrate it later;
- ▶ **Bonding psychotherapy should be redefined as an individual psychotherapy that makes use of a complex group space (workshop or laboratory) where different group techniques are integrated and developed: a multimodal psychotherapy process that could be defined as Bonding Process Psychotherapy**