

Group Analytic Dictionary

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The real "movement" in sciences takes place in the more or less radical and in themselves opaque examinations of their fundamental concepts.

Heidegger

Dear Colleagues,

This an outline for process, procedure and production of an international group analytic dictionary in English.

Background

In Spring 2011 Robi Friedman asked me to comment on a paper he was to give at a conference. In some passages he seemed to use the terms intersubjectivity and transpersonal more or less synonymous or interchangeable. I wondered and objected: inter is between, trans is beyond, I looked up a bit in the group analytic literature - but, and this is the starting point, I had no dictionary to consult!

Robi and I had a preliminary discussion about the group analytic meanings of the terms, he gave his lecture and I started to investigate whether I was right about the none existence of a group analytic dictionary. After all group analysis as a professional field has existed for more than 50 years. But as far as I was able to find out – also by asking my Danish colleagues: Gerda Winther, then president of GAS, London and Kristian Valbak, former president of EGATIN - there is no group analytic dictionary.

That is to my mind both strange and regrettable. Later I learned that a number of colleagues earlier have taken initiatives and steps to make one, but, as I am informed, for various reasons did not succeed in or finish the project.

Why is it so? Is it not necessary to have a general dictionary in our professional field? Is it, due to the interdisciplinary multiplicity of group analysis, too difficult, next to impossible, to make one? Is it a too large and overwhelming task to take on?

Step 1

10 years ago a Psychodynamic Dictionary was published in Denmark (edt. Ankjær Olsen), a large book of almost 1000 pages, also containing biografies. Around 25 colleagues, most of us from psychoanalysis, analytical psychology and group analysis, were engaged. But before coming to the

point of writing Ankjær Olsen had initiated a long interacting process with possible prospective contributors to the dictionary about which terms could and should be included, and which should not, to make as sure as possible to produce a general and comprehensive work. Only after these exchanges and discussions the actual writing began. I wrote about 25 references, mainly on technical terms in psychoanalysis and group analysis.

As a pragmatic means I have taken over this "search--model" in the initial phases of the project for a group analytic dictionary, in order to establish some certainty that nothing important is left out, fundamentally in an effort to pick up and cover as many terms in use as possible, including their theoretical backgrounds.

Initially, in July 2011, in a draft for the whole project, as a search-model I divided terms in 3 major categories. The division and mentioned examples reflects the common use and terminology in theory-teaching and supervision, not an epistemological endeavour.

1. specific group analytic terms:
 2. ex. group-as-a-whole, matrix, basic assumption group(s), conductor, anti-group,
 - 3.
 4. terms from related professional fields with specific meanings or significance in group analysis:
ex. transitional space, transference, projection, transpersonal, conscious/unconscious, dream(s), sub-groups, chaos, intersubjectivity, attachment,
3. terms from various professional areas generally used in group analysis
ex. play, leadership, authority, role, power, field, research, empirical studies.

The idea obviously was, and still is, to put this search-model into operation. Before doing so, in the Autumn 2011, I presented the idea and plan for a "local" group of colleagues: Tove Mathiesen, Bente Thygesen, Lars Bo Jørgensen, Peter Ramsing and Robi Friedman (he is not exactly "local": all of us participate in regular seminars on dream-work with Robi in Copenhagen).

The general response of the group was positive, both in respect to the professional usability of a group analytic dictionary and also concerning the proposed processes of producing it. Many ideas and possibilities were mentioned: seminars and workshops on different terms and topics could be arranged, exchanges and discussions on the internet could arise, new concepts might emerge, ect. So the message from the group was: go ahead!

In the same draft from July 2011 I also put down a sketch for a procedure and frame for the project:

1. that it organizationally must take place as a joint venture between GAS, Int. and/or EGATIN and the local institutes that join the project,
2. initial phase, as mentioned, questionnaire and survey among members and institutes: which terms (categories 1,2 and 3) do you consider important in group analysis?
3. establishment of an international editorial board,

4. after much communication, clarification and discussion the editorial board decides on which terms shall be included and who is going to write on what,
5. writing and longstanding editorial processes, editorial mails and meetings,
6. publication.

At the time I estimated that 2-3 years would be needed for continuous work with the whole project.

Around the same time I heard from both Gerda Winther and Robi Friedman that the plan of a group analytic dictionary had been welcomed at a meeting in GAS, Int.

Step 2

In October, November and December 2011 I handed out a sheet with a short description of the project and the 3 categories of terms, and asked colleagues and senior candidates in the IGA, Copenhagen to put down 25 specific and related terms (category 1 and 2) and 15 general terms (category 3). I had responses from about 15 participants, half of them group analytic colleagues, the other half candidates.

In January 2012 I gave a lecture at the institute in Copenhagen, centered around this project and its (very) preliminary "results" - simply enumerated by frequency of appearance in the lists I received from the participants. "Results" were as follows, with 25 terms in each category, ordered alphabetically:

Specific group analytic terms:

anti-group
antigroup phenomena, ex. scapegoating
basic assumption groups: dependency, flight-flight, pairing
basic group dynamic law
difference as a therapeutic factor
dynamic administration
ego-training in action
free floating discussion
figure-ground
group analysis
group analytic principles
group analytic psychotherapy
group analytic standard group
group-as-a-whole
group conductor
group intervention/-interpretation
group specific factors: condensation, exchange, mirroring, resonance, socialization
large group

levels of communication: actual, transference, projective, primordial
malignant mirroring
matrix: foundation and dynamic
median group
phases of group analytic psychotherapy
transpersonal processes
work-group

Terms from related professional fields:

acting out/in
clarification
collective unconscious
conscious/unconscious
container/contained
defense/resistance
empathy
idealization/devaluation
intersubjective
interpretation
manifest/latent
mentalization
parallel processes
potential space
projection
projective identification
regression
self-object representations
social unconscious
splitting
sub-grouping
termination
therapeutic alliance
transference/countertransference
transitional space

General terms used in group analysis:

affect/affect-regulation
authority
change
chaos/chaos theory
circle
communication

conflict
development
dream
effectivity/evidence
emperical and qualitative studies
environment/culture
family
hierachy
leader(ship)
network
organization/organizational context
play
power
relation
research
role/role-theory
sociology
symbol/metaphor
system/systems-theory

These are, within the frames of the described search-model, the data of a simple counting – with no claims what so ever of being exhaustive or final, only preliminary.

How similar and/or different will these catalogues be in other group analytic institutes? And what may individual group analysts wonder about, add, delete, ect.? These are still, in the initial phase of this project, the questions and an invitation to all colleagues. I have received supplementary lists from Gerda Winther and Steinar Lorentzen.

Some words of clarification of proces and procedure:

The search-model of the 3 categories is not to be taken as an editorial guideline. Just a glimpse at the 75 terms – and many more terms will emerge - indicates that the future editorial board will have quite a number of principal and pragmatic decisions to make as to the general grouping of contents in the dictionary and guidelines for writing it. All the lists and catalogues of terms and the order in which they may have been submitted will be one, and an important starting point for the work of the future editorial board. But not the only one.

As a professional and working assembly the board must work out the final lists of terms. To make a general and comprehensive group analytic dictionary is obviously both an interesting and very demanding task, containing serious obligations and responsibilities in relation to the professional field as-a-whole and the people in it.

Step 3

At a meeting in the "local" group in January 2012 we agreed on 3 issues:

1. a principle of inclusiveness of terms in the project,
- 2.
3. to continue to gather lists of terms, but with a re-formulation of the request to colleagues, simply saying: please, put down the 25 most important group analytic terms, if you like in order of priority,
- 4.
5. that Robi further considers and explores how to proceed in relation to interested colleagues and GAS, Int.

Robi Friedman has made contacts and informed colleagues in Israel, Italy, Germany and Portugal about the project, all of them, as I understand, interested. Also Robi has informed further about the project in GAS, Int. - in the scientific and management committees. Dieter Nitzgen has entered the scene with enthusiasm: "it is a wonderful idea and one much needed". The management committee supports the project, and also I am informed that NILGA is interested to publish.

So, generally speaking, it seems to me by now, that the organizational back-up is there, both "local" in Denmark: Aarhus and Copenhagen and from GAS, Int.. That is very, very important – with a long-lasting and work-loaded project of this kind ahead, with many colleagues involved in different periods and in different roles.

Dieter Nitzgen has by the newly founded German Group Analytic Society been asked to participate in the dictionary project. He accepted, and I thought, with his engagement in the project, now also as representative of the "local" society, and as the learned scholar he is, that he would be an obvious member of the editorial board. I asked him and he agreed. - Later Dieter has made a list of terms, similar and different both in order and content compared to the Danish one presented here.

In January 2012 I took part in a conference in Oslo and met Thor Kristian Island, for many years leader of IGA in Norway. I told him about my ideas and plans and since then we have mailed forth and back. One of his mails contains, from the further perspective of this project, 3 highly productive points: he has thought of concepts not in the preliminary lists; he will make inquiries to colleagues interested in theory and concept-formation and ask them to send proposals; and he shall ask and discuss terms and concepts with teachers at seminars in the group analytic training-programme and possibly send a "bunch of terms". Very much what could be hoped for! - Later Thor Kristian has performed a questionnaire similar to the first Danish issue among 10-12 Norwegian colleagues and come out with list both similar and in some respects different to the Danish lists: among other trends self-psychology seems to have a stronger influence and position in Norway than in Denmark

Future Steps

The main purpose of writing and publishing this article in CONTEXT is to inform about the dictionary project and hopefully to stimulate and create interest and engagement. All group analysts and all group institutes and societies are very welcome to participate: in this initial phase by mailing proposals and

suggestions of terms and concepts. Please use the following e-mail in correspondence and communication: (coming soon).

The editors will try to end this phase of the project by March 2013. By that time also a representative international editorial board shall be formed, heterogenously compounded as to countries (languages), group analytic societies, age and sex. I imagine a number of 5-6 members in the board, one of them preferably from GAS, Int.

One thing is the final product, a dictionary: Another is the whole range of possible uses of the working processes around the dictionary: helping instruments for teaching, facilitating reflections and discussions, organizing events, ect. These kind of options were also mentioned in the first local meetings in Copenhagen; this Autumn we arrange a workshop on different terms with participants in the project and other interested colleagues and candidates.

This is how far the project has evolved by now. How it has developed and what needs it might have further on, I will like to inform about continuously in CONTEXT.