

דברי פתיחה להשתלמות של 3 ימי העיון בנושא של "שייכות : בין כורח לבחירה"

An introductory note to the three study days:

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The overall subject of the seminars "The Israeli Institute of Group Analysis (IIGA)" offers this year is:

Belonging: Between Choice and Inevitability.

This seminar signifies the tenth anniversary of the institute. Its existence and growing, that started years ago, has finally materialized into the establishment of an independent institute in 2000. It has been a labor of love for its initiators, founders, members and students.

This ongoing seminar consists of 3 separate study days held throughout the year (October 2009- Dr Elliot . Zeisel, February 2010- Dr. Farhad Dalal and April 1010- Prof. Stephen Frosh).

Each one of the those days explores the subject of belonging from different angles and attempts to understand its meaning and implications in one's relationship with oneself and others in the group he is affiliated to.

Following are two quotes that may serve as a general framework for the subject of belonging:

Since we are a Foulkian institute it's apt to quote what Foulkes had to say about belonging:

1. Foulkes:

"The first and foremost aspect with which group psychotherapists are usually concerned and according to which they form their concepts is that of belonging, of participation. Being a respected and effective member of the group, being accepted, being able to share, to participate, to belong to the community is a basic constructive experience in human life. No health is conceivable without this. This happens throughout life, but the need for psychotherapy arises when this participation and sharing are disturbed."

These words speak for themselves.

2. Lichtenberg:

The second quote is from one of Lichtenberg's papers. He is a well known psychoanalyst who has written extensively about child

development, emotional interactions and relationships: his saying provides us with the psychoanalytical/ developmental perspective about belonging:

"Analytic theories provide rich descriptions of the need, wishes and desires for loving, affectionate, appreciative and at times, competitive interplay with parents, siblings, peers, friends, mentors and sponsors. In contrast the needs and wishes for an affiliative sense of belonging to groups—family, teams, school, race, country has been largely ignored by analysts without training in group and family therapy. Thus many strong pulls and conflicts that appear in association with feelings of belonging, of being liked, of being included and respected, or feelings of alienation, exclusion, loneliness, and humiliation remain under - explored.....These feelings related to group experiences can be substantially different from feelings related to dyadic relationships. The sense of belonging to a family or peer group is not the same as the sense of feeling connected to a parent. The feeling of being liked by friends is not identical with the feeling of being loved. Likewise, there are differences between feeling alienated and feeling abandoned."

These two quotes from group analysis and psychoanalysis when brought together form a combined platform from which we can explore the numerous issues inherent in belonging; together they can provide a vehicle that enables us to venture into the rather uncharted waters of the complex relationships between the personal and the public aspects of human life.

We suggest that belonging and togetherness can be likened to a network that is held by each one of the individual members that comprise it. Looking closely at the metaphor of "the network" we can notice right away that it carries a number of contradicting meanings: Human interdependence creates a web of interactions that can be both holding and entrapping at one and the same time. It is a resource that safeguards survival, provides richness and strength, but can also be a trap. In this sense, we are the fishermen's net and the fish that is caught in it - at the same time.

Interdependence presents us with a life long question: how to be connected to yourself while also connected to your group; How to belong to yourself and others at the same time. How to be a responsible member, a "neighbor" in one's community, family or group while true to yourself.

The struggle to balance off conflicting needs, to manage physical and emotional realities between self and other is a continuous daily task.

Belonging is inherently a paradox: it enlarges one's sense of being a subject by inclusion of a "we-self" into one's personal inner fabric, but also constricts one's freedom in myriad of ways. The tension

between these opposing poles is one of the subjects we wish to explore in these study days.

Finally it seems that every balance between two poles needs "a third" to stabilize it. Thus, a third quote is added in order to provide a more solid base for our discussions; a word about human "connectivity" from a scientific point of view may present a needed addition:

3. John Cacioppo, director of the department of social neuroscience at the university of Chicago says :

"Connectivity can offer a biologically grounded emotional solace".....This (idea) radically expands the scope of biology and neuroscience from focusing on a single body or brain to looking at the interplay between two at a time. In short, my hostility bumps up your blood pressure, your nurturing love lowers mine. Potentially, we are each other's biological enemies or allies..."

It appears that emotional communication (not to say contagion) , interconnectedness and belonging are related to each other in many ways; together they can expand our understanding of the issues at hand and open new paths for thinking and being with each other.