Individual and Group Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy through dramatization or Analytical Psychodrama at Department of Psychological Medicine of the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, University Hospital Center Zagreb

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Theoretical concepts of analytical psychodrama are described and discussed by French child psychoanalysts Serge Lebovici, René Diatkin and Evelyne Kestemberg. Since 1945 they had been looking with their colleagues for the most appropriate therapeutic techniques for shorter or longer treatment, which would, to a greater or lesser extent, involve the psychoanalytic approach. In their study they were inspired by the early findings of psychoanalysis and at the same time were gathering experience from treating patients with psychoanalytical psychodrama. Eventually, they became sure that expressing through the scenic play can bring significant therapeutic effects, and after a dozen years of experience, while maintaining the technical principles of Moreno’s psychodrama, created the theory of analytic psychodrama. As a new therapeutic technique analytical psychodrama has been applied since 1956 in France, while it has't been significantly developed in Anglo-Saxon countries (Nikolic, 1983).

The professor of child psychiatry Serge Lebovici and colleagues have come to recognize in their work that a game, like speech, is the product of instinctive impulses and defense mechanisms of the ego, thus confirming psychoanalytic theory and its therapeutic possibilities. So the French authors created and differentiated two methods: analytical psychodrama, which is applied to one patient (so called individual psychoanalytic psychotherapy through dramatization), and group scenic analysis that is applied in the treatment of the groups of patients (group psychoanalytic psychotherapy through dramatization).

During his study visits (1972-1973, 1976-1979) to Paris at the "Alfred Binet" Centre with Serge Lebovici, professor Stanisa Nikolic, MD, PhD, has participated as a physician assistant and psychotherapist in his therapeutic team and also gained valuable experience in analytical psychodrama. He also participated in the didactic psychodrama at the Center for Consultation and Psychoanalytic Treatment at the Psychoanalytic Institute, and was a member of the children psychodrama team at the "Claude Bernard" Centre of Paris Academy.

At the end of 1973 professor Stanisa Nikolic, MD, PhD, has begun preparations for the introduction of analytical group psychodrama in what was then called Centre for Mental Health, now the Department of Psychological Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, University Hospital Center Zagreb. His conception of analytic psychodrama was essentially based on the theoretical work of S. Lebovici, R. Diatkin and E. Kestemberg called "Summary of 10-year practice with psychodrama for children and adolescents" published 1958 in "Psychiatrie de l'enfant", one of Europe's most prominent journals in the field of
child and adolescent psychiatry. Many possibilities opened with the implementation of such a research project as part of a clinical psychotherapy department. On one hand, it was possible to select patients, observe them during treatment, and thus better assess the therapeutic process. On the other hand, therapists who have joined in the study of therapeutic process in group psychodrama had enough experience in individual and group analytically oriented psychotherapy in order to monitor and gradually acquire further psychoanalytic understanding of group dynamics and transfer phenomena in terms of scenic expression (dramatization) and evaluate the therapeutic effects.

As evidence emerged of increasing interest in this psychotherapeutic technique, Department of Psychological Medicine of School of Medicine at the University of Zagreb becomes didactic center (Nikolic, 1983). Trainees (the staff of the Department of Psychological Medicine) undergo theoretical, experiential and didactic training according to psychoanalytic postulates.

University Department of Psychological Medicine was the organizer and the host of the World Congress of Group Psychotherapy held in Zagreb in 1986. The Congress has shown a 45-minute educational film about the psychoanalytic psychodrama in our Clinic in which eminent drama actors (Ena Begovic, Bozidar Alic, Sanda Langerholz, Zlatko Vitez and others) show authentic games which took place during therapy sessions at the Clinic, conducted and interpreted by educators and therapists of our Clinic. The Lifetime Achievement Award was posthumously awarded to Jacob Levy Moreno during this Congress, and the award was received by his wife and collaborator Zerka T. Moreno. A number of employees of the Department of Psychological Medicine has written and defended master's theses and doctoral dissertations on analytical psychodrama topic.

At first, the analytical psychodrama as a novel technique was applied in psycho-pedagogic Center of Paris Academy for the rehabilitation of children and adolescents with a variety of difficulties, mainly in the academic field (Anzieu, 1979, in Gatta et al., 2010). Later it was proved to be successful in other psychopathological symptoms among children and adolescents, primarily related to psychomotorly inhibited children, but also to behavioral problems in the family, school and society, and particularly to the sexual identity development disorder (Nikolic, 2004).

Analytic scenic psychotherapy is indicated in patients whose verbalization is difficult, either because of the strong use of projection as a defense mechanism, or because of character changes or the patient's difficulty to express his emotional experience, as an expression of resistance in individual and group psychotherapy (Nikolic, 2004). Difficult verbalization of his own emotional content may also be due to the patient's unwillingness to accept psychogenic cause of his disorder. The technique that is simultaneously working to raise awareness of pathological mental content and creating healthier models of behavior and communication, and thereby overcomes the above mentioned difficulties, is analytical psychodrama itself.

Most widely, analytical psychodrama is suitable psychotherapy technique for all psychological states if the patient has the ability to "play" the role and enter and exit from the "game".
Range of indications includes anxiety-depressive disorders, structural abnormalities, borderline and pre-psychotic conditions, with continuous attention to the current capacity of the patient. Most appropriate population is children and adolescents, since they can play a lot easier than verbalize. It certainly proved effective in adults as well (Nikolic, 1995).

Analytical psychodrama is today an integral part of the regular program of treatment of adolescents (14-18 years) in the Daily Hospital for youth at the Specialist Institute for Children and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, at our Clinic. Outpatients who were in individual psychotherapeutic treatment are also included upon indication. Various profiles of professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social educators, rehabilitators) actively cooperate in a therapeutic team. Residents of the various branches of medicine (psychiatry, family and educational medicine, pediatrics) also attend sessions, as well as psychologists during their training period, which is performed in the Department of Psychology.

Bibliography: