

Rehabilitation of the "self" in an expressive therapy group process

It is my desire to challenge the reader and claim that group therapy that involves the use of expressive artistic means is able to reach the deepest level of therapy in its effectiveness. This means the rehabilitation of the wounded and non-cohesive "self". "Self" is a vague concept, and is even a fiction that is not given to physical proof. To the best of my knowledge, it is accepted as the core of the mind, granting the personality power, balance and gravity. The central claim concerning narcissistic personality disorder and narcissistic personality lines refers to a person who is successful according to most criterion but in spite of that is bitter, in conflict with himself and with his surroundings. Since according to my claim, the experience of creation in expressive therapy in a group context reconstructs the "self", I will attempt to focus on Kohut's (1977) Stern's (1985) and Bollas' (1992) treatment of the importance of artistic creation as reflecting and rehabilitating the "self". I will add my own understanding to this discourse in order to sharpen the great potential there is in expressive therapy in the mental matters of the "self", particularly when done in a group therapy setting.

Howard Baker (1990) a Kohutian psychologist, in his article on the painter Vincent Van Gogh, presents a folk tale that recounts the process of creating the world, in which the universe was an empty space and the creation of the world was done by a crow. Being immersed in the work of creation, the crow almost falls into a bottomless pit, but at the last minute, a tiny sparrow springs to his aid. At first, the crow had a human form, but the more immersed he became in the work of creating the world, feathers arose becoming wings, and finally it turned into a black bird. Baker turns our

attention to three important elements in the tale: first, in the work of creation, the creator creates himself. Second, in the work of creation there is an element of practical danger, and third, (which is important to the matter of group therapy), at the time of danger, the presence of a significant facilitating other is of highest importance, even if it is a tiny sparrow.

At the time of the artwork's formation, in the presence of the created work, and when it is finished (while it is being preserved in the memory of the client, the therapist and the group), we surmise that the experience of creation brings the "creating client" (and the group members participating in the experience), to the client's earliest developmental stage - to infancy. This means the beginning of life, at the time the parental figure and the toddler weave threads of initial emotional connection with a vitality unlike any other, precisely by expressive means (particularly sound and movement) in the period that precedes the development of verbal language. I have chosen to focus in the last part of the chapter on a number of central concepts from the three theories from the last three decades of the Twentieth Century who developed the concept of "self" and bestowed upon it different and complex qualities.

Master's degree students in expressive therapies sit on the floor in the spacious classroom. They have just completed making works of art as they saw fit. I ask them all at the same time, to speak to the works they just created. A tumult ensues. The women's voices, speaking to their artworks, overcome the voices of the few men in the group. They mumble it all. After a few minutes I ask the students to stop speaking and go over, one by one, the last sentence they said to their artwork: **"You aren't the way I planned you."** Reut says. I ask her to repeat the sentence three times. The

repetition of the sentence serves as validation, emphasis and prominence of the message said to the artwork ("**You aren't the way I planned you." Not the way I planned you"....**). "**You are ugly**" says Dalia, a student sitting next to Reut, and repeats the sentence again and again. "**If I had continued, I could have finished you**" Yoav declares, "**Why do you always disappoint?**" David asks, "**You aren't to blame, I have two left hands**" Judy says etc.

When I ask them to, the students change places and sit facing the artwork before them. As they do so, I say aloud: "be the artwork and allow the artwork to answer you!" Tumult prevails again.

McNiff (1979), one of the world leaders in the area of art therapy, very much encourages the client to personificate the artistic images and expressions that appear in artworks. He maintains that beyond the possibility of allowing the client's inner parts of the mind to be revealed through projection on the parts of the artistic product, the client can use the animation of its artistic images as "agents" of the change process. The creator responds as the autonomous spokesman of his "speaking" artwork. This is an experience derived from the civilization of the shaman in which the mask or object held by the ritual participant is experienced as autonomous and the one who holds them relinquishes self and represents the artistic self-object speaking out of the artistic representation.

At my request, the students stop "speaking their artworks" and are asked, being their artworks (using McNiff's method) to repeat the last sentence a number of times for emphasis: "**If you look at me closely, you'll discover something**", "**you think that I'm ugly, I actually think I'm beautiful**", "**I'm sorry I disappoint you.**" "**You are**

actually mostly pleased with what you do"...I ask the students to go back to their original places (the place of the creator) and to continue the dialogue between them and their artworks, and thus to go again and again from their own place to the place of their artwork and back again on their own, deepening the dialogue: creator-creation. What does the text teach us from a therapeutic point of view that passes between the creator and his work and what does the text teach us that arises from the artwork's response to the creator? For the answer to this challenging question, I will present the concept: "self object" and – "artistic self object".

"Selfobject", is a concept coined by H. Kohut (1971). It is an inner image (intrapsyche), meaning the infant's inner perception of his parental figure. Kohut points out that while the infant studies the parental figure and gradually learns its characteristics, he forms his perception of selfobject as an image of the supportive inner parent. This learning process of mental scheme building is applied in the creative process in expressive therapy. If the infant's parental image is perceived by him as providing optimal psychological conditions (that is, the infant senses consistency on the side of the parents, the expression of admiration combined with the optimal measure of frustration), the development and appearance in the infant's mind of a representation of a cohesive core self can be expected. The existence of an experience of selfobject is a fantasy and it is a positive mental need that continues throughout life. We are always in need of a supportive inner image that actually comprises a representation of our "self". The image of selfobject can also be non-human, an inanimate object, Kohut calls it a surrogate selfobject. In 1984 Kohut speaks of a direct connection between the art product and the core self. When he relates to the art of the tragic hero (that suits our subject very well, a client who is a group member in a therapy group exposed to expressive creation during the course of

therapy), Kohut indicates that the figure of the tragic hero "if it is presented in a poem, spoken or written as an epic, as a musical composition, drawn on canvas, on stone or presented on stage, it is always connected to the human effort to revive the individual's core pattern of self. The tragic hero, Kohut says, is a person who in spite of his mental and physical brokenness, and even in spite of his biological desistance, will always be victorious because his core self arises and overcomes (37). Kohut maintains that artistic creation issues from the pre-verbal phase. When he relates to music, for example, he claims that it touches on a deep, pre-verbal level, and hearing music releases pleasure. In his view, a necessary condition for pleasure from music has two sides. One is the combined ability to go into regression to early ego states that arouse fear and lack of control, due to the initially unclear musical material. On the other side, to simultaneously use advanced ego functions, identify and follow the line of sounds being formed while listening." Kohut asserts that the creative person, whether he is a musician struggling with musical material that is yet unclear to him, or a poet attempting to put together fragments of words, a painter and sculptor in initial touch with material, all represent fragments of the self. Through connection and organization of the fragments, an attempt is made to create a new, whole structure, complete and significant" (286).

It appears that in the initial state of the group exercise, in the dialogue between the creator and his artwork, most of the students reflect an image of a "self object" that is critical and hostile that developed through the presence of the parental image at the primary stages of their lives, a non-empathic, critical figure, holding up high expectations. Is this a testimony to what Alice Miller (1979) determined, that therapists come to the mental therapy profession due to a narcissistic injury in childhood? The dialogue with the artwork (when the artwork takes on life of its own

and replies to its creator from an autonomic monologue) and the presence of the facilitator and the group in the situation (as a third identifying and active factor) create a dynamic triangle of space, "room", or "analytical third". This dynamic triangle takes place between the (1) creator, (2) his artistic creation, and (3) the group/therapist, as representatives of the "present significant other".

Now I would like to present a triangular paradigm of "artistic self object"

relations that will explain the therapeutic work done with the group of students at the stage in which they spoke to their artworks and when their artworks "answered them." According to Rotenberg (1988), the creator/students – from a psychological point of view, are babies whose artworks comprise a parental figure that aroused in them an experience of selfobject. There is a paradox here - that the artwork actually comprises a "maternal figure" for the creator from a psychological point of view. Using the concept of "artistic selfobject", coined by Itamar Levy (1990) in his article:

Decoration, Impersonation and the Denial of Depth, I call this state: the development of the "artistic selfobject". As the infant, who gradually learns the parental figure and builds for himself the 'selfobject' by internalization, the creator learns the product he created, and by this gradual process, creates an experience of the artistic selfobject.

The more the creator investigates his work and its qualities are made known (like the infant), he grows and experiences a sense of self competence. The fact of creating an artistic object in expressive therapy (whether it is movement, sound or sketching) the created object becomes an "artistic selfobject" that paradoxically comes into being for the creator. But more than this, if we continue the therapeutic process, (as the students were requested to do) and will get the client's consent to allow the artistic product to "speak itself out" (if the movement therapist will propose to her client to momentarily

be the slouching shoulder and allow the shoulder to speak its piece, or if the music therapist will encourage the client to sing the fist's song that pounds the drum with rage, and the art therapist will turn the client's attention to the cut- off tree stump and will want to hear what it will say to the client who this very moment finished drawing it), then things will be turned upside down. In this situation the creator will experience for the artistic creation "selfobject". When we personify the artistic creation in expressive therapy, and give it an autonomous, independent experience, and enable it to speak itself to its maker (through personification, or as McNiff would call it, through the autonomy of the image) the creator (paradoxically) becomes a selfobject for his artwork that was personified, and now the artwork (that was an artistic selfobject before) becomes an infant creator's creation. Now the client/creator has an opportunity to experience both of the roles of the subject (infant) and object (mother-parent) in the primary object relations alignment. He can also experience the "good enough mother" for his artistic creation, and can also experience the infant's stand developing the "selfobject" while being introduced to the artistic product before him. (Incidentally, this is done freely and spontaneously in children's games with a doll when the doll is allowed to talk from their throat, creating a dialogue with it). The creator (the student, the client) learns from this situation to develop good and beneficial (empathic) parental skills for his work that reciprocally heals him and is the reparatory act of the injured self. **It is clear that in parallel, the reciprocal relations of the client/student to his work, are parallel to building "object relations" of the client to the group. Note that I do not indicate the "group members", rather the group as an inclusive entity. The individual as "creator" and the group as "art product". The client who seeks an "amazing group" doesn't know how to invest in the object so that it will be "amazing" for him. Thus the relation to the**

artwork I made can be transferred to the relation to the "group" to which I contribute quality by being one of its members.

Now let us address the third aspect of the paradigm, that is related to the transference and counter transference in art therapy in the group context. Here the therapist enters the picture (the observer and participant in the process) and the group (that experiences the dynamic event between the client and his work). We are engaged here with what they are experiencing at the time the group member talks with his artwork and changes roles. We know from Kohut's (1971) theory that a client with a narcissistic injury ascribes to his therapist the emotions that characterize the transference relationship of "merger, or fusion" (I, the client, swallow you) and "twinship" (you the therapist are substantially me and I am substantially you). This is a known state in classic verbal therapy that is difficult and challenging for the therapist, requiring "containing" and tolerance. The therapist experiences himself being controlled by the demanding client. In group processes it is found that the client with a narcissistic injury expects the group members to understand him, to identify with him, to accept him as if they were he himself.

However, in expressive therapy that occurs as a mediating agent in healing or in group intervention, in the experience of the artistic selfobject, in the presence of the client's art product, we encounter the third phase of artistic selfobject relations at the level of the therapist and the group. The group and the facilitator, who up to now took part in the therapeutic process from the participant observer point of view, being free of the burden of direct transference on the therapist-client level (or client-group), can now relate to the client's art product and see it as an artistic selfobject for themselves. They can take the work from the client, with his consent of course, and sample the relationship alignment in the object in the presence of the "artistic selfobject" that

they appropriated with the permission of the therapist. Rotenberg who engages in "art and the self" maintains that observing the esthetic artistic product is not only a matter of pleasure or suffering, rather, it has in it a deep mental experience related to change in the observer's self. (In this sense, the facilitator and the group members who are mostly engaged in observation of the artistic product of the group members need to consider the process I will now describe. (Because understanding Rotenberg's paradigm clarifies the aspect of counter transference in expressive group therapy). Rotenberg analyzes the experience of observation from a psychodynamic point of view and asserts that at the beginning, the observed artistic object is unfamiliar and generates a sense of frustration (similar to the process the infant undergoes in getting to know the parental figure), but the more the understanding of the observed object becomes refined, a sense of satisfaction and crystallization to the point of excitement arises in the observer. Ernest Wolf, a student and partner of Kohut, calls this experience "empathic resonance", and this sensation aroused by the familiar artistic product, causes a sense of wholeness and harmony in the self. In the context of group therapy this can be one of the group member's repeated movements that develop into a very personal dance, a pattern of sound played during a musical moment that develops into a melody or stages in the development of a drawing. If we spoke of the group as a "place" and artistic work as an artistic "selfobject" the boundaries of the experience of "selfobject" fantasies, do not end in the physical area of the object that serves as a source of building an inner image. Grasping the concept of selfobject also includes everything that is found in the space continuing from the object to the mind of the observer. Rotenberg says: It will be a person, a stage, canvas, a screen etc. all of these generate an existential experience of self in the observer in the here and now from the fact of their physical presence, but they continue to exist both in time and in

future action due to what they aroused within us. Self mergers are both psychological and spiritual in daily life without having to channel them. Fusions between the self and the object are not necessarily archaic, primitive, regressive, hallucinatory or paranoid experiences. When we say that a certain drawing, dance, or song "speaks to us", it testifies to the fact that the organized form before us is proclaiming a language and voice of its own. Rotenberg speaks of a reciprocal relationship between the creator and the art he has created. He claims that the creator outwardly exposes unclear mental content and parts of the sensations of self, and then relates to these materials as if they were not his own. Whoever is immersed in this content seems to be controlled by the materials, demands a correct solution for them, demands to be brought to wholeness. I seek to go deeper and discuss the therapeutic strength there is in the artistic object created in the group "setting". I would ask: how does an artistic act that is an inanimate object, movement or sound serve the mental purpose of selfobject? Rotenberg asserts that in an esthetic experience, the 'self' observing the art object (speaking of the group members and the facilitator, as well as the creator of the artwork) are influenced by the creator's personality that is transmitted through symbolic meaning. As if the artwork is a sophisticated concentrate of the personality of the creator. In the moments of the esthetic experience, the artistic gesture comprises a function of the "selfobject" not due to its visual qualities only, rather to the compressed communicative and symbolic tension it arouses in the self of the observer. (From here, the strong dynamic involvement of the facilitator and group members in what the group member who is working in the presence of his created artwork is undergoing). I will give an example:

Upon my request, the students break up into pairs so that every pair will have two visual artworks previously created. I ask one of the partners to be the "therapist" and

the other person in the pair to be the "client". Note that for every pair of students there are four therapeutic entities: the student/client, his artwork, the student/therapist and his artwork. We can now get a quadrilateral dialogue (not necessarily verbal...) between the four role functions and their artworks. I asked those in the role of clients to stand before their artworks, to identify in the work a segment or a more inclusive piece that could be a choreographic scheme for movement for them. In doing this, I ask the clients to try and go, by means of their visual artworks, to an experience of movement, with the artwork comprising a choreographic sketch, a movement line for the client. This instruction takes the client from passive verbal observation to an active position in space. The role of the therapists at this stage is to follow the movement in order to later give feedback to the client "in motion" regarding what he saw (an act of mirroring). Slowly the clients examine their artworks, a very intimate approach to the artwork is evident, as if the client is reading "movement writing" that is concealed within the work and is expressed in the contours, the dots, the protrusions, the creases, and the three-dimensional lumps found in the work. These visual materials, that become movement developers for the client, contest with his defense mechanisms, transporting him to a gradual spontaneous flow that finally leads to new and surprising insights. Very slowly, we reach the "world of movement therapy". They start to move around their artwork and identify primary movement prototypes, beginning with moving limbs according to what is drawn and sculpted in the artwork. I ask the clients to remember their artworks, to close their eyes while in motion, and with their eyes closed, to develop the movement and reach a dance created from the seeds that have remained etched in the clients' visual memory. We move strongly toward the unconscious, and obtain "authentic movement" that is a mode of dance that is dictated by the "self" (a therapy method in movement according

to Jungian theory). The moving students begin to breathe strongly, grimace, groan, shout or sing. The therapists, the partners observing the artistic act of movement, make room, protect their partner in motion, experience what is seemingly external but are very stimulated within their own inner world. I ask them to mimic the movement of the dance of their client, in order to learn the meaning of the movement, and to be a mirror to their partner who is in motion. Finally, a conversation will take place in pairs between both sides, the client (what he sensed in his body and what he is aware of) the therapist (what he saw and what took place within him). Now the pairs are requested to change roles. The process is repeated. Later there will be a discussion about how and in what way the movement and artwork of the first affected the movement and artwork of the second in the presence of his artwork. A strong emphasis is put on insights and meanings the movement experience raised.

Why did I find it appropriate to combine the medium of movement in the group context and in what way did this experience contribute to the rehabilitation of the injured self? Daniel Stern (1985) disagrees with Kohut and determines, based on his observations of infants, that already at birth, the infant has an emergent sense of self. Already during the first few months of life, the infant uses inborn a-modal perception and can grasp information by means of one sense and in some way to transmit and express it by means of another sense. In this way, the infant, non-verbally, connects emotionally with his surroundings. The infant, in Stern's opinion, transmits "metaphorical emotions" to others by means of movement, sound and expression.

Stern called this emotional metaphor: "vitality affect". The transmission of non-verbal information that is related to emotions, changing dynamics, support and reservation, are very accepted when artists are immersed in artistic activity. A string quartet, a dance corps, an artist and his instructor etc., speak little at the time of the artistic

occurrence and develop by means of an a-modal perception, the capacity to connect as described by Stern. The a-modal perception in expressive therapy serves as a channel for healing communication that is built on artistic mirroring. **While the client expresses himself with one artistic medium (such as movement), he can receive from the therapist and the therapy group a supportive emotional message through the use of another artistic medium (for example the therapist and the group clap to the rhythm of the client's movement). The client's response will testify that even though he is involved in one artistic medium, the "vitality affect" of the therapist or the group are perceived by him and are right for him.**

In this process of non-verbal emotional exchange (the pre-verbal maturity of the newborn) Stern presents the role of parent as an evoked companion. He emphasizes the importance of non-verbal interaction by means of movement and sound for the purpose of exchanging emotions and calls the kindling of the parental figure in this interaction: "stimulating partner". In expressive therapy the facilitator and the group have an important role in the function of the "stimulating partner" only (I mention here the small sparrow in the Inuit legend).

When I convene all the students on the floor in a circle and ask them to share with the others the experience of movement that issued from the artworks, the insights and emotions that emerged, a mystical atmosphere comes about. In this atmosphere, the central idea brought out by the members relates to the great intensity of surprising insights that emerged during the movement and are not related to the subject of the artwork they made: "I was stunned at the level of violence that came out from me when I allowed myself to hit the air with my fists." "I suddenly understood that I was mourning for my mother, even though my mother is not dead," said someone who had spent the whole time in movement sitting on her knees, bent over and crying bitterly,

while her artwork comprised, it became clear in retrospect, a gravestone. "I knew you were there for me the whole time I was moving, and I even sensed you beside me the moments I over-did it and almost stepped on someone, the feeling that someone was watching over me took me back to my grandfather who used to take me to the park when I was little. I suddenly missed him so much." "What huge anxiety I still experience from the fact of being allowed to move around in space," says an older student who is retraining and making a career change, "I could go on and on with it endlessly" says a student smiling broadly and stretching his arms upward.

Bollas (1992) maintains that the self strives tirelessly to fulfill itself through objects. Even though he is a pronounced psychoanalyst, he relates to the "self" as an autonomous, creative mental mechanism that seeks to break out and be revealed by means of a creative, unconscious mental program he calls: genera. Thus, according to his agreement in a supervision conversation with me when he was in Tel Aviv a few years ago, Bollas touches in his understanding of the "self", upon Jung's concept of "self" that already in the 30s of the last century, saw in the "self" the center of the autonomous-archetype of the mind with active and creative potential. Bollas throws special light with his presentation of the concepts "esthetic moment" and "protective object" on all regarding the use of the artistic product in therapy in general and in the group context in particular. We return to the mother (or the parental figure), perceived this time by the infant as a transformational object, meaning, an object toward which it grows and for whom it develops. The parental figure in Bollas' opinion is actually the first human esthetic experience in the person's life. (Just a reminder, this is the first phase in Rotenberg's paradigm according to which the creator, being exposed to the art product, gradually experiences the artistic selfobject).

Bollas also speaks about the "esthetic moment" as a pre-verbal experience that remains throughout life (similar to the selfobject). Only that Bollas here identifies an element of magic that we often experience in expressive therapy. The newborn, in Bollas' view, senses in the esthetic moment as if he were magnetized symmetrically and in absolute isolation from the parental figure. (In our case to the art product, and to the enormous emotional effect movement had when it sprang up as a result of the artworks). This moment has the following qualities: **a deep connection with the object that is perceived as sacred.** (This relates to the exercise I gave the students for curiosity and for the energy of decoding they had to do in the transition to movement, and the identification of lines or sections of a drawing that can be translated into movement). **The moment appears as a complete surprise and there is a sense of connection to the object** (relating to the emerging insight at the time authentic movement develops) **and at the time of the experience of the esthetic moment, time stands still and has no significance.** (See the students' comments during the feedback phase at the end of the movement process). Esthetic moments can be identified in expressive therapy when the client is caught by and drawn to the work done, shows amazement, is curious and is fascinated by his work and is interested in continuing to experience the encounter with the artwork at a high motivational level. Bollas asks; "Why does the esthetic moment arouse in us a deep sense as a connection to a sacred object? What is the basis of this perception?" And he answers, that the answer is found in the object itself. The object always appears by surprise. This surprise, he points out, is accompanied by an experience of fusion with the object: this will be a symbol, song, melody, sound, landscape and so forth. (Reminding you of Rotenberg's approach regarding the merger of the self with daily objects). Bollas says: "It is a strange pleasure to be held in the arms of a poem or a drawing. This pleasure is

the seal of the moment in which the inner world of the infant takes on esthetic form by means of the mother without whom they could not be formed or connected."

(Reminding you again of Stern's concept of the evoked companion).

I ask the group members (the students) to place their artworks on the floor in front of them and to have a conversation with the parts of their artworks (using the Gestalt therapy method). The direct connection with the elements of the visual artwork (that took on life and became movement and dance), bring the students back to their artworks in a different state of awareness and emotion, a "more advanced" state that is characterized by the loosening of defense mechanisms. A thin, angular student asks to work. Her artwork makes her curious, particularly now, and she asks for the attention of the group and the facilitator. As previously mentioned, she is sitting on the floor and her art product is facing her. It is reminiscent of a "woolly nest" pinned inside a lump of wet clay with blue and gray gouache stains. The work is not intelligible; a primal moist lump of clay is exhibited. Nonetheless, according to the way she related to the artwork and the manner in which she placed the lump between her legs, it is evident that the artwork has great significance for her.

Bollas presents the concept *the conservative object* in his theory of the "self". It speaks of the image of an object found in the unconscious containing a memory that has yet to be ascribed to an event or a state of external reality. The conservative object originates before language development, preceding the "honoring" of any object by the infant as a marker and as conserving a state of self that the infant cannot express in words. Over time, when he didn't at all expect to encounter the conservative object, (as mentioned, the surprise effect) in such an esthetic moment, the object will appear accidentally, releasing content that was confined in the unconscious by repression, out into verbal awareness. Expressive therapy is a huge nest of mind - watchers in which

conservative objects break out in stirring esthetic moments. Bollas says: "the remembering body contains the earliest memories from the beginning of our existence, this is a mode of knowledge we have yet to think about that includes parts of the *unthought known*."

We can identify the conservative object in expressive therapy when the client creates or is drawn to an artistic product in movement, voice, melody or rhythm, that at first sight is lacking immediate significance for him, but due to strong emotional intensity and inner motivation, the client is unable to take his attention away from it and is drawn to work on an encounter with it experientially. Gradually it becomes clear that this artistic product has a deep, repressed memory stored within it and constitutes an artistic conservative object for the client. (I cannot but note here the concept "bush soul" that Aniala Yaffa points out in Jung's book *Man and his Symbols* according to which the personification of a stone or any object, needs to be explained as a projection of deeper content within the sub-conscious into the stone or symbolized object). If so, the angular student's work apparently constitutes an artistic conservative object, or artistic selfobject since she does not understand its significance but senses its importance and her connection to it.

Bollas speaks of six phases in the release of the conservative object (1) sensation, (2) structure, (3) memory, (4) projection, (5) symbolization, (6) conceptualization.

I suggest to the student to close her eyes and let her fingers wander over her artwork. (in this way I invite her to experience an imprinting sensation, phase one according to Bollas). The student responds and after a while, her fingers begin to move in circles around the woolly nest (she creates a scheme/structure, phase two, that becomes clear as a rotating circle). Her face is distorted with suffering, tears run down her cheeks (it

is evident she has reached the phase of memory, three). I suggest she remain with the experience and to ask herself about the emotion or what the emergent image tells her. She is quiet but her eyes dart showing she is engaged by the object. Suddenly she says: "I see a swimming pool, a pool of dark water (phase four, she is projecting). Speak to the image, I encourage her, ask what the image symbolizes for you (phase five). She whispers to the gouache stain and identifies it as the fish pool at the kibbutz where she was an "outside child" in her childhood. I suggest that the pool wants to say something to her. I present the water with a question: "What would you like to say to her?" Suddenly she represents the pool and says: "You are so lonely here, there is no one near you." A dialogue between her and the artistic conservative object begins. Near the end, the pool says, "You are so busy and troubled, you should come back to me". In a discussion with the group members the student arrives (who moved to Tel Aviv because of her studies) to a conceptual understanding (phase 6) of her need to balance her life and says: "I need to learn not to fear being with me as in my childhood, when I was so connected to myself by means of the pool".

The group members are moved. I ask them to write a letter to themselves. We go for a break and after that, reading the letters in the group brings them together with the need to make sure they have a self support system, especially during their studies when they are exposed to intensive emotional and cognitive challenges.

Bollas, as well as Kohut, is fascinated by the connection between the creative unconscious (which he calls genera) and the art product. Bollas teaches us that there is handwriting in the unconscious, a musical score, a plan that directs human creativity. "We dream ourselves to fulfillment by means of the use of objects that create our authentic language and extricate it in various modes of expression. There is great happiness in finding an object that contains an experience through which we grow and

change." According to Bollas, the genera is the creative program of the unconscious. This program is composed of a collection of unconscious mental idea clusters whose origin is of repressed sources (as Freud maintained) but also from mental sources (that coincides with Jung's understanding). The dynamic of the genera is characterized by ideas, emotions and moods that emerge gradually from the chaos of the outermost part of the sub-conscious to the forefront of consciousness, arousing sublimated emotions and organizing themselves creatively in a new way. We can identify genera in expressive therapy in the creative artistic process that begins through evidence characterized by lack of clarity, disorganization and chaos, continuing into partial clarity and focusing on new options and points of view and finishing with an original and creative solution that gives a sensation of elation, sometimes suffering, that also leads to insight.

More than once, in the many years I have been engaged in expressive therapy with groups and with individuals, I wonder where my patients draw the unconscious knowledge how to lead me by means of their artworks to the creative therapeutic process in the fields of experience, while they bring their genera program together with my genera program. Or as Bollas calls it, they carry out a dialogue with their artworks and with me a communication between the unconscious, and give birth to their authentic "self" in their personal, original language for their own sake and for the sake of the group members who contain the experience and participate in it.

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