

Radical Therapy

The fifth decade

Gino & Yasha (2020)

This chapter presents Radikale Therapie (radical therapy or RT) as an approach that has been practised in Germany since the mid-1980s. RT is a method of self-help group therapy conducted without professional therapists. The method operates within self-organised networks and is passed on free of charge by people who have experienced RT themselves. The therapeutic concept of RT is based on the theory and practice of radical psychiatry (RP) (see Chapter 7), with the addition of various working and support techniques from co-counselling (CC). Some elements of RT also have parallels with the concept of emotional literacy (EmLit) (see Chapters 12 and 13).

In the tradition of RP, the term “radical” identifies the conceptual focus of understanding and working on individual problems within their underlying social causes. The aim of the therapeutic work, therefore, is to free oneself from internalised oppression, to recognise new options for action, and to implement the corresponding decisions in everyday life. In this chapter, we first explain the methodological background and the history of RT, and, in doing so, also give an insight into the current practice of RT and the status of the RT movement in Germany today. Finally, we briefly summarise the central features of RT¹.

Radical Psychiatry

In 1969, Steiner wrote the “Radical Psychiatry Manifesto”, which included a fundamental critique of the psychiatric system in the United States (US) and argued that the discipline of psychiatry was infiltrated by irrelevant medical concepts. For him, diagnoses and diagnostic methods were “meaningless mystifications” (“Radical Psychiatry Manifesto”) as they obscured oppressive social structures as a significant cause of psychiatric disease. By remaining neutral in the context of oppression, psychiatry – particularly as it was practised in the public sector – had become an enforcer of the values and laws of the establishment (Steiner, 1975a). Other influences on RP include Marxist and feminist perspectives, articulated especially by Hogie Wyckoff. The RP groups considered and addressed personal problems and patterns in the context of alienation theory, expressed by the formula: Alienation = Oppression + Mystification + Isolation (Steiner, 1975b). The

1 This chapter was translated from German, a language in which one word (Geschlecht*) stands for both sex* and gender*. The authors see both sex and gender as cultural constructs, hence the English version mostly translates Geschlecht as “gender/sex”. Furthermore, this translation maintains a strategy developed in the German-speaking feminist context to convey an “open space” for all gender identities, whether male*, female*, or genderqueer*. This so-called “gender star” (Gendersternchen) is an asterisk (*) added to words – including supposedly unambiguous ones such as female*, man*, trans* and queer* – in an attempt to question the dominant binary norm of sex/gender and also to mark it visually. All references to persons of a given sex/gender pertain to persons who assign themselves to the respective sex/gender. Finally, the singular “they” is used even when the presumed sex/gender of a person is known, thus: “Every woman* in the group is free to work on their issues.”

therapeutic work on personal issues was based on a liberation approach and summarised in a complementary formula: Liberation = Contact + Awareness + Action (Steiner, 1975b), by which the therapeutic work in such groups had an explicitly political dimension and also aimed to develop a way of coping with oppressive situations (see Wyckoff, 1975a, 1977).

Steiner and Wyckoff argued that individuals are socialised to develop certain "sex roles" and are affected by sex/gender-specific alienation phenomena due to different experiences of oppression (see Wyckoff, 1975a, 1975b). For these reasons, RT established women's* groups and men's* groups as well as "mixed groups" (concerning sex/gender), each led by therapists of the Radical Psychiatry Collective (see Steiner, 1974a, 1975i; Wyckoff, 1974, 1975b, 1977).

Claude Steiner was an early student of Eric Berne and eventually became a teaching member of the International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) in 1960. Within the RP movement, Steiner made strong links with and references to Transactional Analysis (TA). The 24-page booklet, *TA Made Simple* (Steiner, 1971e), served as a handout within the RP groups and networks. Therapeutic group work was carried out especially in problem-solving groups (PSGs) whose practice in the 1970s can be regarded as TA-based group therapy (see Wyckoff, 1970). Participants worked intensively with models of ego states, transactions, and games, in the form of the drama triangle (see Karpman, 1968). The Critical Parent ego state was named "The Pig" and "The Pig Parent", the latter of which was also used in TA. Therapeutic exercises such as "Off[ing] the Pig" (Wyckoff, 1975a) and "The Critical Parent Exercise" (Steiner, 2009) were developed. Drawing on contracts and the three P's (permission, protection, and potency), people worked on individual influences and on resolving their scripts. On the social level, RT groups aimed at refraining from destructive psychological games among themselves and, instead, to enter into intimacy in their relationships with each other (see Wyckoff, 1970, 1977; Steiner, 1975).

The essential elements of what later became EmLit were developed in the group work of RP. For example, already in the PSGs of the 1970s, the cooperative contract (no secrets and lies, no rescues, no powerplays) was the basis for cooperative collaboration. There were structures to check intuition or paranoid fantasies; to communicate unpleasant emotions regarding the behaviour of other group participants; and to exchange appreciation according to the five permissions to overcome the stroke economy (Steiner, 1971c) with its five prohibitions (see Wyckoff, 1977). Over time, the concept of EmLit developed as a separate approach (see Steiner, 1984b, 2003c, 2009; Steiner & Perry, 1997; and Chapters 12 and 13).

Co-Counselling

Co-Counselling (CC) (also referred to as re-evaluation counselling) is sometimes called "therapy without a therapist" (Berger, 1996). It is a self-help therapeutic technique developed by Harvey Jackins and Mary McCabe in Seattle, Washington, in the 1950s. CC is based on reciprocity and not on payment. As a rule, two people are involved in a CC session. Within the framework of an agreed time commitment, people alternately support each other. First, as part of a CC training, certain working and support techniques are

learned. During a CC session, the co-counsellor first and foremost gives full attention to the person who is “working” (i.e., the client at that point), and may also offer specific interventions to assist the client’s process. However, in each case, the primary responsibility for the therapeutic process lies with the person “working”, that is, the client (see Ernst & Goodison, 1981; Evison & Horobin, 1990; Jackins, 1982, 1994; Risse & Willms, 2011).

According to the theory of CC, psychological problems are due to the limiting patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaviour that individuals develop as a result of unprocessed painful experiences. The aim of CC is to work on this pain from the safe position of the “here-and-now”. A key assumption in CC is that clients discharge and release emotions thanks to physical expression through body and voice. The conscious and regular practice of such a cathartic process serves to liberate the person from states of tension and to clarify their thinking and feeling. This, in turn, enables them to carry out a re-evaluation of the original stressful circumstances and, finally, to detach from fixations on certain patterns. Thus, CC enables intensive, profound, and therapeutically effective work on the psychological level (see Jackins, 1982, 1994).

According to Ernst and Goodison (1981), Meulenbelt (1983), and Rowan (1987), CC combines the “personal” with the “political”, as individual problems and patterns are also seen in the context of social causes; in a more recent book on the subject, Kaufmann and New (2004) explicitly refer to psychological suffering and internalised oppression.

In the early 1970s, Gail Pheterson worked as a Co-Counselling Trainer with Harvey Jackins and Mary McCabe and was active in the US in both RP and CC communities. In Pheterson’s understanding, both methods were related in different ways to a political-personal analysis. She saw the two approaches as methodologically and politically compatible and complementary. In 1975, she linked the concept of problem-solving groups from RP with the theory and practice of Co-Counselling into a new group practice and collaborated with Lilliam Moed on multi-day workshops within the politically active feminist movement in the Netherlands (see Pheterson, 1978).

RT as a self-help therapy

In PSGs, an appropriately trained member of the RP Collective would guide group sessions and accompany problem-solving processes as a therapist. Pheterson and Moed, meanwhile, taught their workshop participants to assist each other with CC techniques. The premise was that the newly formed groups would continue to work together for a year without professional guidance and that participants would take turns leading group sessions (see Pheterson, 1978; van Mens-Verhulst & Waaldijk, 2008). The result was what Meulenbelt (1983) called “a new form of self-help therapy” (p. 107). These groups were referred to as FORT groups (Feminist Oefengroepen Radicale Therapy), which translates as feminist radical therapy exercise groups.

The groups instructed by Pheterson and Moed eventually formed networks in the Netherlands. By 1978, there were about 40 FORT groups (Pheterson, 1978); the Netherlands are said to have had a “strong FORT movement” as early as 1976 (Rauch, Detlefsen, & Stoebbener, 1996, p. 3). Over time, many women* who had attended a

FORT group for a year or more began to help disseminate FORT and instruct new groups. Their efforts partially benefitted from state subsidies, but women* also volunteered within the FORT movement (see van Mens-Verhulst & Waaldijk, 2008).

Wyckoff's work had a strong impact on the practice of FORT and in the late 1970s Wyckoff and Pheterson were in touch personally. In 1979, Wyckoff's *Solving Women's Problems* (1977) was published in the Netherlands under the title *Vrouwenpraatgroepen: Feminist Oefengroepen Radicale Therapy*, with the subtitle being a legible reference to the FORT groups already established in the Netherlands.

FORT and M*RT

In the Netherlands RT was initially practised only within women's* groups, but pro-feminist RT men's* groups, referred to as "Mannen[*] Radicale Therapy" (Men's* radical therapy or M*RT), began to emerge in the early 1980s. Both FORT and M*RT were based on the conviction that relationships between women* and men* are characterised by patriarchal power structures. Thus, in the FORT groups one important concern was to become aware of sex/gender-specific oppressive life circumstances and to develop an ability to resist them. The M*RT concept was based on F*ORT in terms of both theory and method, with a few conceptual changes². These included the intention to develop an awareness of the privileges of masculinity and to foster responsible behaviour. The engagement with the privileges of masculinity was a key element of the M*RT introduction (described below); it filled a complete session during the second weekend and included an exercise in which participants examined these aspects with reference to their own personal lives (see Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985).

As Steiner, Wyckoff, and other radical psychiatrists have emphasised, an underlying assumption of both FORT and M*RT is that, over the course of their lives, women* and men* experience different injunctions and attributions, that they inevitably undergo distinct processes of adaptation and develop corresponding patterns of behaviour. One of many objectives of both FORT and M*RT has always been to foster awareness of having been socialised as male* or female*, and to allow participants to free themselves from self-limiting and socially destructive behaviours that result from this socialisation.

While it was considered fundamental that women* and men* should practise in separate groups, there was also a lively exchange between FORT and M*RT networks (see Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985).

In the mid-1980s Dutch people with RT experience brought the method to what was then West Germany. The first German M*RT group became active in West Berlin in 1985; the first F*oRT group was set afloat the following year (see Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985). At this time, the meaning of the acronym FoRT in Germany was changed into "Frauen* organisieren Radikale Therapie" (Women* organise radical

2 The distinction between FORT and F*oRT is as follows: FORT without an asterisk refers to the groups in the Netherlands where the "F" stands for "Feminists"; F*oRT with the asterisk or gender star (see endnote above) refers to the groups practiced in the Germany as the "F*" here stands for "Frauen*" (women*). Also, while the "O" in FORT stands for the Dutch word "Oefengroepen" (exercise groups), the "o" in F*oRT stands for the German word "organisieren" (organised).

therapy). Since then, numerous new RT groups have been set up in Germany, resulting in a lively RT movement of some 30 years standing, in which several hundred people have practised – and continue to practise – RT in regular groups as well as in various national meetings and networks.

Relation to sex/gender in the RT movement today

In Germany, RT is still often practised in male* and female* groups. The concepts of F*oRT and M*RT continue to be based on the idea that people are socialised according to a male–female binary model, that they experience sex/gender-specific attributions and injunctions, and are immersed in social power structures.

That said, the RT community is made up of people who represent a great variety of perceptions and ideas about sex* and gender* as well as related roles and identities. Some concepts of sex/gender rely on biological or esoteric models. Classical sex/gender role models are sometimes considered “natural” and individually experienced as “authentic” expressions of “femininity” or “masculinity”. In this context we might ask to what extent individual groups are still aware of the original goal of fostering sensitivity about sex/gender roles, and in how far established ideas about masculinity and femininity are being reproduced within RT. It should also be noted that within M*RT each person is free to decide if they want to engage in a critical examination of their privileges and responsibility; the pro-feminist objective that was key to the original M*RT concept is at risk (see Tha’sa, 2000).

RT was initially practised more or less exclusively by cis-men and cis-women, that is, individuals who identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. RT groups remained inaccessible to trans* people for a long time, failing to provide a setting that was safe enough. In recent years, trans* people have become more vocal criticising this practice and the construction of sex* as well as gender*. This has led to a growing accessibility of existing F*oRT and M*RT structures. Over the last few years, moreover, RT groups emerged that describe themselves as all-gender*, queer*, trans*, inter*, and non-binary*. Even the asterisk in F*oRT and M*RT is becoming more and more established.

Instruction of new RT groups

The instruction of a new group (also known as “RT-Start”) takes place over two weekends (Friday to Sunday) with an interval of six to eight weeks. These two weekends provide room for a systematic induction into the theory and practice of RT, for therapeutic work on individual topics as well as for group dynamic processes. Between the two Start weekends, the group meets weekly without external guidance or facilitation. After the complete instruction the new group should be able to maintain the therapeutic setting independently.

Finally, at the end of the second Start weekend, each person decides for or against a commitment to the new RT group and, if applicable, concludes a contract to participate for one year. At the same time, all members of the new RT group receive a written document

summarising the background and principal rules of RT (Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985).

The instruction of new RT groups is given by two or three people who themselves have participated in a regularly instructed RT group for at least one year – mostly much longer. In addition to their own RT experience, instructors need to have some in-depth knowledge of the backgrounds of RT, and the instruction process entails detailed preparation. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the instruction is given with a clear reference to the underlying procedures and backgrounds of RT. As a result, their potential remains unexploited in many groups. In our view, both the therapeutic and the political potency have been watered down in some cases.

Over the past 30 years the RT movement has given rise to different collectives working to ensure that the dissemination of RT was based on solid theoretical foundations. Since late 2015 an "RT-Starter*innen-Kollektiv" (RTSK; RT Instructors' Collective) has been active in Germany. At present (January 2020) it consists of nine people, among them the authors of this chapter.

Publications on RT

Through various publications by individuals associated with the RT movement, RT has been made known especially in socio-critical circles (see Althöfer, 2017; Baruch, Frühling, & Mono, 2015; Breitenbürger & Faber, 1996; Hillar & Frick, 1996; Männerrundbrief, 2000). At the same time, the concrete practice of RT is not explained explicitly anywhere: the M*RT and F*oRT scripts (Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985) are restricted for use within the RT movement and remain unpublished. One of the reasons behind this decision was to prevent people from creating therapeutic settings without prior and well-founded instruction.

Framework for the self-organised therapy setting

After the second Start weekend, the size of an RT group is usually between ten and twelve people. The RT group meets weekly for three to four hours. The sessions are prepared and facilitated by participants in pairs, and they take turns with this responsibility.

Time

In RT, a conscious and transparent use of the resource of time is practised. At each moment of the session, one person has the clock in view and makes appropriate time announcements, according to agreements or basic rules. For some elements of the RT session, the same amount of time, to the exact second, is available to every person, whereby an "extension" can be granted, with the exact amount of extra time being transparent to the group. In this way, individual patterns – usually a tendency to take up a lot of space or very little – can be made transparent, and also be changed. As part of the individual working time, each person first announces how much time they wish to work on a topic; the pair who lead the session take responsibility for moderating the decision-

making process on how the available time is ultimately shared, taking into consideration the needs and concerns of all group members. Thus, a cooperative attitude and process is practised as an alternative to competitive behaviour.

Mutual support

During the RT session the participants work with mutual support based on CC (see description above). Whenever someone takes time for therapeutic work, they ask another one for support for a concrete number of minutes.

Reference to the body

According to CC theory, the body is involved in therapeutic work as a carrier of emotions and painful experiences. RT also encourages participants to pay attention to their body in order to become more sensitive to its messages. All physical needs and expressions are explicitly allowed.

In different situations of the RT session the person who is working has eye contact with their support person, who usually stands opposite them. The working person remains standing, which allows feelings in the body to become more noticeable; various forms of physical relief (such as hopping, pounding, stretching, shaking, etc.) are also easier to perform. The supporting person is physically present, too, in that they usually hold the working person's hands and, at times, reflect their physical expression.

In RT groups, there is explicit permission for participants to be physically close to each other. While the group mostly sits on the floor or stands – both in a circle – participants often have physical contact with the neighbouring person and/or lean against each other. Such bodily contact often quickly develops into a normality, even in new groups, giving many a strong sense of comfort and safety within the group. At the same time, a person's preference not to have body contact is treated with respect.

Individual responsibility

Within the fixed structure of RT, each participant decides on the content and form of their therapeutic work. It is everyone's responsibility to formulate their own needs as well as their boundaries. Different tools are in place to allow every person to take care of their needs and to guard their boundaries in a practice of self-care. As part of the Start weekends, the roles of the drama triangle (see Karpman, 1968) are explained, in order to counteract possible game dynamics within RT groups, and to convey possible alternatives and exit strategies.

Attention

Another aspect of RT – also based on CC is the balance between "free attention" for whatever is happening during the session and attention to oneself. Specifically, this means that every person in the room focuses their attention as much as possible on the process that is currently at the centre of the group's activities. This ensures that the person working can use the structured space without competition and receives a high level of

attention from the group. At the same time, everybody directs a certain amount of attention to their own inner processes. If a participant's attention shifts strongly to their own thoughts, emotions, or impulses for action, they can, after a short consultation with the facilitating pair, and with the support of another person, carry out a short process that is referred to as "Aufmerksamkeitsarbeitszeit" (attention working time). This process allows a person's attention to the group's activity to be restored by relieving emotions, briefly expressing thoughts, and/or carrying out a short problem-solving action (such as closing a window or putting on a sweater). In this way, all individuals can practise being in constant touch with themselves and taking their needs seriously so that they, in turn, can refocus on the work of others.

Contracts

As in the problem-solving groups of RP, and in EmLit training groups, in RT the cooperative contract – no secrets, no lies, no rescues, no powerplays (see Steiner, 2009; Wyckoff, 1977) – is the basis of cooperation. In addition, RT insists on agreeing a group contract about regular and binding participation in the group. This also implies that each person assumes responsibility for organisational matters as well as for facilitating the RT sessions. The group contract creates clarity and strengthens confidence in the group right from the start. Moreover, in RT, as well as in the former PSGs, individual contacts with regard to self-defined therapeutic goals are being worked on.

Structure of the meetings

Since RT groups are not run by professional therapists, therapeutic group work is based on a clear structure with a differentiated set of rules. The two Start weekends ensure there is a common level of knowledge across the group. The decision to participate in the RT group includes an agreement on shared responsibility for the implementation of the structure and rules as defined by the concept of RT. This mutual commitment replaces the responsibility for and control over therapeutic processes and situations that, in other group therapy settings, falls to a professional leader.

The clearly defined (and time-limited) responsibilities and the regulated structure of the meetings create a secure framework for both the individual and interactive processes in RT. CC techniques as well as methods from RP, PSGs, and TA are integrated within the sessions (see Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985).

Check-in

At the beginning of the RT session, each person, one by one, gets a specific amount of time to explicitly focus their attention, to perceive current emotions and thoughts, and to briefly express these (hence the "check-in"). This makes individuals more aware of their current condition and creates transparency within the group about the focus on the "here-and-now".

Goods and news

Following the check-in, each person has the opportunity to focus, with support, on good and new events and developments in their life, to connect with associated positive emotions, to verbalise relevant effects; and, at the same time, to identify their contribution. The point is to ensure that RT is not only about working on distressing topics, but also about creating access to one's sense of joy and about celebrating one's personal development and life as a whole. This exercise strengthens confidence in personal resources and creates a joyful climate of mutual empathy within the group, which counterbalances self-devaluation and negative views of one's own life circumstances.

Working time

In each RT session, a block of time is provided for working on individual topics using Co-Counselling work and support techniques. This working time usually takes place in front of the group and with the assistance of another person. Every person can address distressing events, life circumstances, and behavioural patterns. According to CC, this also provides a targeted relief of certain emotions. During the Start weekends, participants learn about various models from TA; they are also guided through exercises in self-awareness so that every person in an RT group can systematically fall back on the methods in their working time. As a rule, participants are free to decide on their topics and methods of their working time, provided the general principles of RT are observed.

For instance, a person's working time offers an opportunity to identify the injunctions and attributions associated with difficult issues and to work on the resolution of "pig messages" using the concept of internalised oppression from RP ("the Pig") and the methods of CC. This is about developing new attitudes and permissions, making the appropriate decisions and tackling the difficulties related to their implementation. In line with RP's approach to liberation, a person's working time can help them break through isolation with regard to their own problems (contact) and the obfuscation of oppression (awareness), allowing them eventually to develop and implement problem-solving actions (see Althöfer, 2017).

Table 9.1 Radical psychiatry and Radikale Therapie

Radical psychiatry	Radikale Therapie
(Paranoid) fantasies	Gespinsterunde (Round of [paranoid] fantasies)
Action/feeling statements	Grollrunde (Round of resentments)
Strokes	Schmuserunde (Round of strokes)

Fantasies, resentments, and strokes

Each RT session includes three more structural elements called "rounds": a round of checking out paranoid fantasies, a round of resentments, a round of strokes. These

elements have their origins in the theory and practice of problem-solving groups from RP; they are also based on the concept of EmLit (see Table 9.1).

Each round has a specific purpose. In addition, the rounds all serve to foster clarity concerning the relationships within the group. In order to ensure a safe framework for the respective processes, RT specifies a number of rules pertaining to these rounds (they are described in the following paragraphs). Each participant pays attention to observing these rules themselves and, if necessary, the facilitating group members intervene.

“Gespinsterunde”: the round of (paranoid) fantasies

This round offers an opportunity to check fantasies or intuitions that refer to another person in the group – for example about their perception, their thinking, their needs, their intentions. A “Gespinst” is to be verbalised clearly and the person addressed is to answer honestly. In this way it is especially possible to clarify “paranoid” fantasies which also burden the relationship with another participant.

In principle, the round of fantasies has the same purpose as similar exercises in PSGs or EmLit. Essentially, it is about training one’s intuition and learning to let go of excessive fantasies (or paranoia), especially if the accurate part or aspect is confirmed and not denied. In terms of RP, this round aims to counteract the “alienation from the mind” (Steiner, 1981d) or, in TA terms, the “no mind script” (Steiner, 1974a).

In the PSG and EmLit trainings, the recipients of the fantasy usually respond with full sentences, as a result of which a moderated dialogue often develops. In RT, the recipient only gives a short answer: “Yes”, “No”, or “Partially”.

PERSON A: “I have the fantasy that (in situation x) you were angry with me.”

PERSON B: “Yes.”

The focus here is on confirming (or not confirming) the “grain of truth” of and in the fantasy; this is why the pertinent part (not the inaccurate part) is formulated in a few words. If necessary, the person receiving the fantasy may ask the one who has initiated this process to reformulate their statement or to provide a concrete example. Likewise, having received the answer, the initiator may also further reformulate or specify their (paranoid) fantasy to come to a more satisfying clarification. There are a number of other rules or guidelines pertaining to the expression of and response to the “Gespinst” or fantasy. The highly ritualised process allows us to clarify the many threads of a single fantasy and helps us to avoid unnecessary discussion and justification(s) (see Rauch et al., 1996; Van Velden & Severijnen, 1985).

“Grollrunde”: the round of resentments

During the “Grollrunde” unpleasant emotions regarding the behaviour of other group participants are made transparent and treated therapeutically. In order to have and maintain a safe frame, this doesn’t happen anywhere else during the RT session. At the beginning of the Grollrunde, one of the two facilitators asks the group: “Who wants to take advantage of ‘Grollschutz’ [resentment protection]?”, which means not being

confronted with resentments in this session. Then one after another, including the facilitators themselves, participants answer with “yes” or “no”.

According to CC, the Grollrunde is also an explicit space for discharging emotions, and by that to use anger in a therapeutically constructive manner. Here both participants have the personal support (as described above) of someone else. There is a clear structure to ensure the necessary protection for everybody. Different variants of the Grollrunde have been established in F*oRT and M*RT groups, as well as for reasons unrelated to the sex/gender division, but, despite the differences, the Grollrunde always includes the following questions and steps:

1. What was the situation? What did this trigger in me? This involves a brief and factual naming of the trigger situation or the concrete behaviour to which the resentment refers.
2. What did that trigger do for me? This involves naming and releasing the emotions that occurred in the context of the situation or that, in retrospect, become present once again.
3. From where do I know this? Here, the personal biography and the personal relationship to the underlying issue is worked out or named. In some groups (and especially M*RT groups), a fourth step follows:
4. What do I want for our relationship? This expresses a wish – regarding the relationship – that shouldn’t be an appeal to the other person.

In conclusion, and depending on the particular group practice, the person who had the Groll states “I had a Groll for you” or “I got rid of my Groll”, and the person on the receiving end of this work answers with “I heard your Groll”. Then there is no more direct interaction in regard to this.

The processing of a grievance is not about lengthy explanations, so in general three or four minutes are enough. In RT, the attitude is that a Groll is welcome as a gift, as it also serves to clarify the relationship, to keep contact free of unspoken emotions, to counteract a hardening in the relationship, thus enabling a higher degree of closeness.

As part of the Grollrunde, participants learn to perceive their emotional reactions to certain triggers more consciously and to understand them in the context of their own biographies. This allows them to come into contact with previous injuries and to treat them separately, beyond the Grollrunde.

“Schmuserunde”: the round of strokes

At the end of each RT session, the Schmuserunde takes place. This element of RT is designed to break the rules of the stroke economy (see Steiner, 1971, 1977d). In other words, the five prohibitions – don’t give strokes you want to give; don’t accept strokes you want; don’t reject strokes you don’t want; don’t ask for strokes you want; don’t give yourself strokes – are reversed into explicit permissions. Thus, essentially, this round is about giving strokes, accepting strokes, rejecting strokes, asking for strokes, and giving oneself strokes with the attention of the group. In RT, participants do not express polite gratitude for a stroke. Instead, they take a moment to decide whether it “tastes good”

(acceptance) or “doesn’t taste good” (rejection), which is then briefly verbalised. Thus, in terms of RP, this round aims to counteract the alienation from the heart, and in TA terms, counters the “no love” script as well as psychological games played to satisfy stroke hunger. The result of this closing round is that participants provide themselves and each other with recognition (strokes according to TA), learning and practising an unrestricted approach to appreciation – a practice they can then integrate into their lives.

The current state of the RT movement in Germany

Today RT groups exist throughout Germany. There have always been certain geographic accumulations, with most groups being based in Berlin. Over the years, RT as a form of therapy has evolved into a self-organised community of people who have practised and appreciated it, either on a temporary or a more long-term basis. Beyond the regular meetings of the individual RT groups, various multi-day nationwide meetings with up to 150 participants (including children) take place throughout the year.

Within the RT movement, there is no formal organisation to prevent concentration of power. Thus, there is – intentionally – no authority to establish binding guidelines. As a result, different practices in terms of session design and the scope, form, and content of the dissemination have been developed and practised over the years. Discussions on the theory and practice of RT are conducted on various occasions and in different constellations.

Many of the people within the RT movement are cis-gender, heterosexual, white, able-bodied; there have been occasions when people with other affiliations experienced discrimination within RT – which leads to the important question as to what mechanisms exist within the RT movement that exclude people and how these can be addressed.

Concluding remarks

Radikale Therapie has existed in Germany for more than 30 years as a non-commercial, self-organised approach and has always been passed on without financial interests by people who identify with the background of RT and have benefited from it themselves. Individual access to RT is free and unbureaucratic. Some alternative communal living projects have also been using RT elements in a non-therapeutic way for their group meetings (see Hillar & Frick, 1996).

Through a reference to RP, participants can examine and address the difficulties they face in their lives in the context of social conditions. RT groups provide many opportunities to work together to develop a shared sensitivity and awareness of oppression. Although RT, with its history and underlying theories, is a political, socio-critical approach, there is no guarantee that the correspondence between “the personal” and “the political” will be considered in individual practice. The structure of RT offers no fixed elements for analysing the influence of social conditions on the participants’ individual issues. Generally speaking, moreover, individual decisions to thematise specific issues or not are also obviously influenced by their own position in society. Therefore, it is possible that existing power relations will not be perceived or indeed reflected in RT. In our view it could be a

step forward if appropriate exercises were developed and integrated into the regular structure of RT.

Participants in RT groups tend to quickly lose their fear of strong emotions in themselves and others; together they develop a joy in exploring and expressing their emotions and in participating in the emotions of others. In RT, people learn to understand their own needs, to take responsibility for them, to acknowledge others' needs, and to take them seriously.

In RT, profound therapeutic processes are possible without professional therapists. For many participants this practice has a strong empowering effect. Against the background of mutual support, participants in RT groups not only experience themselves in the client role, but from the beginning they also experience being able to support others in working therapeutically on their personal issues. Moreover, shared leadership means that all participants assume responsibility for the group process. In this way, RT creates a therapeutic alliance at an eye-to eye level, and thus promotes mutuality and equality.

In general, the attitudes implemented in the structure and rules of RT lead to sustainable personal development and an expansion of the possibilities available to a person in the way they manage their life and relationships. Thus, RT ultimately also has an effect on the social environment of people who have integrated the RT experience in their lives.

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