

BOOK REVIEW

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The Technique of Group Treatment: The Collected Papers of Louis R. Ormont. Edited by Lena Blanco Furgeri. Madison, Connecticut: Psychosocial Press, 2001, 399 pp., \$39.95.

Experto credite.

[Trust one who has gone through it.]

Virgil, *Aeneid* bk. 11, l. 283

Lena Blanco Furgeri, the editor of this volume, characterizes Dr. Louis R. Ormont as a Virgil in many people's lives, "guiding them through the labyrinth of the unconscious." Dr. Ormont has been through it all and is a trustworthy guide. He was there in the beginning in 1942 when he tells us there were fewer than 20 people who identified themselves as group therapists, and his contributions continue to the present day, recently receiving a standing ovation from hundreds of his colleagues after a giving a day-long seminar for AGPA. Fortunately for us, he has written about his experiences over the years, and Dr. Furgeri has collected 24 of his papers. The earliest in the collection was published in 1957 and the latest in 1999.

After an introduction by Furgeri, and an overview of modern group process by Michael Brook, the papers are divided into seven sections. The first includes two recent papers by Dr. Ormont, outlining the rise of modern group analysis and its emphasis on "the group, as a whole, as a force for growth which no therapist can equal" (p. 38). The next section is on the newly formed group, which focuses on the group contract and its use in resolving resistances to progress. Following these are sections on resistances, countertransference, and conjoint therapy. Next is a section on bridging, a group technique that Ormont has named and developed, which strengthens the emotional ties between members, helping them to "identify and resolve one another's resistances to making personal discoveries and establishing new relations" (p. 287). Finally, issues around

aggression, immediacy, and emotional insulation, daily encounters for every group therapist, are discussed in a series of papers.

Dr. Ormont's style is to the point, exciting, and filled with a pathos and enthusiasm for the group process. He has an outstanding ability to simplify and get to the point, without sacrificing richness. The papers are immediately useful for the beginner and the experienced therapist. He frequently uses real-life examples from his practice and follows this with his patient's responses. While Dr. Ormont's perspicacious remarks are impressive, they are usually followed by the patient's rebuttal, which is then followed by a resistance analysis. Resistance analysis is a common theme addressed throughout the papers. Dr. Ormont regularly focuses on the resistance and how to use the power of the group to overcome it.

An example of his focus on resistance is seen in the earliest paper in the collection. In a 1957 paper on preparing patients for group, he tells us that there are typically three approaches: education, reassurance, and resistance exploration. He stresses resistance exploration. When the patient asks, "What happens in a group?" Dr. Ormont recommends we use this question as an opening wedge to explore their resistance. He suggests saying, "Perhaps it is more important to know what you think happens in the group." The patient will then tell their objections to joining the group. Ormont states that each objection hides a specific fear. By exploring what threatens the patient, the therapist then has a choice of educating, reassuring, or dealing directly with the resistance. By focusing on the resistance, a shared therapeutic goal develops between the patient and the therapist, which often allows the patient to enter the group where they can explore and work through their resistance more fully.

I have used Dr. Ormont's papers over the past 10 years in teaching a group psychotherapy course to foster intellectual discussion among my students. Having the papers together in one volume is valuable. Following suggestions by Adler (1983) on how to develop intellectual discussions, I have the students select a paper that interests them. They pair it with a paper or two that takes an opposing view and then raise a few questions focused on the differences in technique, which they then use to lead an hour-long discussion.

A published example of this appears with the original publication of Ormont's 1999 paper. In it he outlines the criteria for a well-functioning group: (1) the members must put their feelings into words, (2) the feelings they express must be toward one another, and (3) the communication must be progressive in that it reveals new aspects of the members' personalities. Gordon (1999) follows Ormont's article with a contrapuntal commentary. He is concerned that Ormont's criteria for a successful group may contribute to a group organized around action. Gordon cautions, "The wish to achieve a cure, particularly through (mobilizing) ac-

tion can feed into omnipotent phantasies and move away from the identification, understanding and communication of the possible meaning of the transference-countertransference (internal object relation) interaction" (Gordon, 1999, p. 155). By pairing Ormont's papers with one like Gordon's, we not only get the advantage of Ormont's wisdom on the technique he describes, but it can also lead to a provocative student discussion on the perennial issues in group psychotherapy.

Having these papers in an affordable paperback edition with an excellent index is valuable. Because the papers will be read and re-read, I think the binding should be Smyth-sewn so it will lie flat and not lose its pages over time. In a future edition, it would be helpful to have the date of each paper's original publication at the beginning of each chapter as well as an introductory paragraph as seen in MacKenzie (1992). Seeing the papers in their context along with their subsequent reception will enhance their value. Empirical studies are absent from this volume. We can hope that some of the many students Dr. Ormont has inspired will commit themselves to empirically demonstrating the advantages of modern group analysis.

Dr. Ormont's comparison to Dante's Virgil has proven apt. Over the years, he has guided us through the Hell and Purgatory of group process up to the very gates of Paradise. Through it all, he demonstrates a reverence (Woodruff, 2001) for the group and the individual, which will be a good guide for generations to come.

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