Before I begin, I would like to dedicate my paper to Brendan Duddy and Ross Lazar who passed away last year. They were two giants in the theory and practice of GR. Both were my teachers and a source of inspiration to me.

Brendan’s work, is, in my opinion, the best example in the world of applying GR to social purposes. Brendan, together with the late Gordon Lawrencehe, applied the GR ideas in practice by holding the thin and venerable thread between the IRA and the British government, as was shown in the moving BBC documentary *The Silent Peacemaker*.

Want to ask - what…

Some years ago, in my role as a chairperson of the scientific committee of the Israeli Psychoanalytic Society, I helped to organize a working group called “When one wall is falling.” The task of this group was to discuss the boundary between the psychoanalytic setting and the external world, especially when the external world penetrates into the psychoanalytic setting.

I would like to use this very important occasion of celebrating OFEK’s 30th birthday to discuss OFEK’s study of the border between the psychoanalytic inquiry of society and the external world.

Let me start with some examples:

1. Some years ago, during an OFEK retreat, the following question was raised: “If you could meet Ehud Barak (who was Israel’s Prime Minister at the time) in an elevator, what kind of advice would you give him?” In my mind, this fantasy reflects a very strong wish on the part of OFEK and its members to be involved in the political decision-making process in Israel. Of course, it raises the question of what kind of political involvement we mean. Consulting to politicians? Discussing ethical issues that Israeli society is facing as a result of its colonial policy? Is the present political system or any political system open to this kind of consultation, which involves attention to the unconscious factor of behavior?
2. A second example: Last June, during the Israeli group relations conference, I was running together with Yermi Harel to one of the groups I was consulting (We always seem to be hurrying the next event as if the world would collapse if we were late!). In the middle of the main corridor of the hotel, just in front the dining hall, a very violent fight broke out between an Arab man, who was working in the kitchen, and a Jewish man, who was a part of the Birthright Israel program—an educational organization that sponsors free ten-day [heritage trips](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage_tourism) to [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) for young [Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish" \o "Jewish) adults , aged 18–26. I froze for a few seconds, and then I passed them, proceeding to the room I had been assigned. Later in the day, I started to doubt my decision. Did I make the right decision? What was more important: my role as consultant in the conference or my ethical and moral responsibility to do something about this act of violence taking place in front of me? Later, I approached the Arab man and I was told that the person from Birthright had ordered the Arab man to immediately remove a dead cockroach that was lying on the floor. This story was confirmed by the cameras which documented the event. The more I thought about it, the more disturbed I was with my decision-making. Is my dissociation defense mechanism so powerful that it allows me to ignore such a violent event? What can be the cause behind such a mechanism? And of course, what significance does this have for OFEK?
3. The 3rd example, did not happen at OFEK, although it is related. Some months ago I participated in a psychoanalytic symposium in Brussels entitled: “Psychoanalysis and Homosexuality.” It was a very important topic mainly because historically homosexuality has been defined by psychoanalysis as a perversion. I was not surprised to find that the percentage of people who declare themselves openly as homosexuals or lesbians in the European psychoanalytic societies (including the Israeli one) is significantly smaller than their percentage in general society, not to mention transsexuals. This striking phenomenon is also true of OFEK: we have very few members who are part of the homosexual community.

In fact, most OFEK members come from the same socio-economic class—the so-called upper middle class. In other words, the homosexual community is not the only community not represented in OFEK. This raises the question of whether there is space for otherness in OFEK at all. Shmuel Erlich once defined the unconscious as the inner “other.” Not having others in our organization makes our role of observing the social unconscious an almost impossible task. It turns OFEK into closed club of people who belong more or less to the same social stratum.

I was taught by some of my teachers that responsibility is the ability to respond. In Hebrew responsibility, “Achraiot,” is linked to the word “Acherot”—“otherness.” Are we failing to respond to others or otherness?

Is it so difficult for OFEK as an organization inspired and influenced by psychoanalytic theory to look at homosexuality, not as a pathology but rather as an identity issue? Can we assume that some homosexuals avoid joining OFEK because they are afraid to be looked at according to the DSM?

Just one comment that for me is crucial in this discussion: In psychoanalytic theory and practice as well as in the world of group relations there are some issues that are or were culturally biased, such as homosexuality and the issue of female identity, and there are others that are timeless and, although they may manifest in different ways, are still an inherent part of human nature, such as the idea of the unconscious and the natural human need for boundaries. Often, I note in OFEK discussions as well as in psychoanalytic discourse, in general, how a hypothesis becomes a determination, and how a hypothesis becomes a fact. Failing to distinguish between facts and hypotheses and not drawing a line between cultural qualities and universal qualities of human nature will in my opinion lead to stagnation and it will make psychoanalytic and GR theories more and more isolated and irrelevant.

If so, my hypothesis is that there are some organizational issues that do not allow defining the boundary between OFEK and the external world in its political, cultural and social aspects in a more open, more flexible way and a way that is more willing to let in voices that will challenge our theory and practice. We have learned on many occasions that transforming a boundary into a thick wall narrows our ability to observe the complexities and paradoxes that characterize our political, social and cultural realities.

Let me now turn to some central concepts in our theory and discuss them in this regard.

1. **Boundary.** There is no doubt that there is a basic human need for boundar**i**es. The need to distinguish between me and not me, the need for a private as well as a public space, the need for basic laws of existence, as well as the need for identities: All those needs are linked with boundaries. But is the nature of the boundaries the same as they were 60 or 100 years ago? I doubt it. Isn’t there a need to reexamine our conceptualization of the boundaries of task, time and space? In this digital generation, many of our traditional boundaries do not exist, so what are the new boundaries? What is their nature? How does this influence our theory? If we want to influence the world around us or at least try to understand it …….
2. **Authority**. The definition of authority in GR was based on the Freudian Oedipal paradigm and on the cultural atmosphere prevailing after the Second World War. Things have changed a lot. The idea of the family is changing rapidly; we now have single-parent families, or two, three and even four parents. In many organizations, the idea of authority is vague and abstract where some systems are horizontal with no defined authority. How does this influence our theory and practice? Some of the founders of the GR theory served in the British Army during World War II and were influenced by a sharp and clear-cut hierarchical system. For me, the A, B and T sub-conferences remind me of stories from my father (who was a Sergeant in the British army) about the three different dining halls for privates, for sergeants and for officers in the army.

I want to discuss our training system briefly. The culture and structure of our training system is very much influenced by the training system in psychoanalytic institutes. The teaching as well as the learning environment is very much based on the culture of dependency. You are not allowed to challenge the authority of the director of the conference because in doing so you risk not being invited to more conferences. In a conference, a group that ventures into new territory—unrecognized by the authority—will almost always be interpreted as acting out and not as attempting to cross the boundaries into the unknown in the service of curiosity and innovation. The result will be a kind of punishment that precludes those participants from the conference resources such as consultants etc. The average age in OFEK is relatively high. Our new-comers are around 40, and it will take some time until they are invited to our conferences as staff members. The culture of dependency penetrates the deepest tissues of OFEK and makes it difficult to find young members that will take official roles, and even more difficult to find those who will have the courage and the inner authority to challenge aspects of our theory.

There are many things I do not understand about the younger generation, but in my estimation one of the main changes is the relationship to the idea of loyalty. Young people are much less loyal to organizations, just as organizations are not loyal at all to their workers. The move from one organization to another one involves less anxiety and guilt. But they are still loyal to ideas. It is the culture of a hub and matrix. They will adopt psychoanalytic ideas without feeling the need to join psychoanalytic societies or institutes. If I am right, then adopting the idea of GR and open system theory does not require joining OFEK. So what kind of relationship will OFEK develop with people who distinguish between the ideas and theory that lie in the infrastructure and OFEK as a construct that subscribes to those ideas? This is not an easy challenge. But are we willing to consider a non-organizational event?

***So how can OFEK redevelop and “resuscitate” a healthy, lively, discourse and discussion?***

David Foster Wallace, one of the main authors and philosophers who represents the voice of the younger generation, claims that one of the main dilemmas of this generation is the choice between security and liberty: one has to sacrifice some degree of security in order to have the space to think and discuss freely in a more liberated way.

I want to raise this question in regard to OFEK.

Are we willing to sacrifice some degree of security in order to allow ourselves as members to discuss internal and external issues in a way that will allow liberty of thought?

There are heavy black clouds above the state of Israel. Israeli society is becoming more and more a tribal as was recently stated by Mr. Rivlin Israel's president. The idea of oneness is related now to the tribe. No contradictions, no paradoxes are allowed in the tribe. You can't be religious and left wing; you can’t be right wing and humanist; you can’t be left wing and nationalistic. Belonging to a certain tribe allows you only to support your tribe and deride the others as in a football game. The culture of ONENESS is taking over; you are expected to cheer your tribe. There is a link between the nature and culture of a tribal society and the culture of opportunism and corruption.

**From the point of view of ethics and psychoanalytic values, we cannot** just stand on the sidelines and observe. Hanna Segal’s paper from 1987 “Silence is the Real Crime,” where she discusses the the nuclear arms race is our lighthouse.

Is OFEK adopting the nature of a tribe? Are we willing to step forward and say publically and bravely what GR and psychoanalysis have to contribute to the understanding of political, social and cultural reality? The future will tell us.