

The Group as Legacy: A Tribute to René Kaës*

O grupo como legado: homenagem a René Kaës

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A legacy does not end with published works or with a name consecrated in the history of the discipline. Some legacies endure, continuing to operate in ways of thinking, listening, and transmitting. Authorship can create psychic spaces where others can think (Kaës, 1997, 2005). It is in this sense that we recognize René Kaës as a central and enduring reference.

This editorial emerges from the recognition that René Kaës's contributions extend beyond group psychoanalysis to influence our comprehension of bonding, psychic transmission, and the ethical responsibility inherent in psychic work (Kaës, 2001, 2014). As Vínculo's 2026 volume starts, this editorial honors his legacy while reaffirming a commitment: not to monumentalize his work in silence, but to cultivate it as a living and generative field of inspiration for those who write, read, research, and think with the journal.

Situated in the tension between memory and presence, between inheritance and invention, the strength of Kaës's thought becomes evident. His legacy is not limited to concepts. He transmitted gestures, rhythms, and modes of listening that continue to traverse time, inviting us to inhabit group spaces with vitality, ethical responsibility, and creative openness (Kaës, 2011).

Kaës did not merely theorize the group; he instituted it as a psychic space of speech, conflict, memory, and transmission. For him, the group is neither a backdrop nor the sum of individuals, but a living psychic apparatus shaped by inheritances, unconscious pacts, silences, traumas, and promises (Anzieu, 1984; Bion, 1961; Kaës, 1997). Engaging with his work entails a double movement: an archaeological return to preexisting psychic layers and an opening toward genesis, where new meanings can emerge between subjects (Kaës, 2005).

His group's devices do not emerge from anything. They are born from a history woven by shared experiences, from encounters that trusted the group as a space for formation and transformation. Along this path, older practices shift, empty themselves of rigid directions, and reorganize around a subtle axis: the word that circulates, that binds, that sustains the common, and gives singular form to each subject (Bleger, 1967; Kaës, 1997). In Kaës, these traces do not repeat themselves: they transform. He reminds us that creating a device is to negate without erasing, to reinvent without forgetting, and to allow the group, at the same time, to find itself and to reinvent itself (Roussillon, 1991).

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²René Kaës (1936–2026), French psychoanalyst, Professor Emeritus at Université Lumière Lyon 2. Author of foundational works for group psychoanalysis and relational configurations, including *The Group and the Subject of the Group* (1997), *Transmission of Psychic Life Between Generations* (2001), *Common and Shared Psychic Spaces* (2005), *A Singular Plural: Psychoanalysis Put to the Test of the Group* (2011), and *Unconscious Alliances* (2014).

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In the groups he describes and conducts, time condenses. Intensive seminars, dense encounters, experiences that do not extend indefinitely but leave marks that persist. There is a silent ethic of psychic work here: the group as a formative, clinical, and investigative space, where the word—always the word—remains central. It is the word that institutes the frame, sustains the play, gathers lived experience, gives form to the unsayable, and transforms it into a possible figure (Bion, 1962; Kaës, 1997).

In psychoanalytic group psychodrama, the wager is radicalized. The body becomes present, not to replace speech, but to announce it. Dramatization summons the preconscious, mobilizing memories, images, and affects still without words. And then speech returns, gathers, elaborates, and symbolizes. Speech and play follow a delicate order, weaving the architecture of psychic work, especially when trauma threatens to rupture the threads of representation (Moreno, 1993; Lebovici, 1970).

Kaës taught us that the group is a privileged space to work with what has not yet been said, thought, or dreamed. That certain sufferings—individual, institutional, cultural—only become treatable when they find a common and shared space (Kaës, 2005; Pichon-Rivière, 1971). Whether in large groups, intercultural groups, institutional devices, or groups with mediating objects, there is always the same ethical concern: to sustain the process, to foster elaboration, to allow something of the unrepresentable to find form (Green, 1990; Kaës, 2014).

Perhaps one of René Kaës's greatest legacies is this: he formulated the concept of the group psychic apparatus (GPA), which functions as an operator of thought, a common apparatus shared by subject and group, making possible psychic formations that precede the subjective position of thinking. The GPA compiles the sociocultural and psychic dimensions of the group in each subject and within the group. There are unconscious pacts that precede us, silent alliances that bind us, and transmitted negativities that demand work (Kaës, 2014; Abraham & Torok, 1978; Puget, 2005). And psychoanalysis, by allowing itself to be questioned by group devices, expands its field without losing its rigorous fidelity to the word (Kaës, 1997).

Kaës left us devices. Above all, however, he left us with an ethic: to sustain spaces where the bond can be thought—even when it hurts, even when it fails, even when it carries the weight of history (Kaës, 2011; Ricoeur, 2000).

There is no end to this legacy. It continues in each life, multiplies in each new group, and is reactivated through the word that weaves new modes of existence (Levinas, 1988).

At *Vínculo*, a journal born from commitment to relational configurations, to the group, to transmission, and to collective thought, honoring René Kaës is to recognize a lineage. It is to affirm that we continue to believe in the group as a place for the elaboration of suffering, to produce knowledge, and for the invention of possible futures (Kaës, 2005).

In this movement, grounded in what binds us and recognizing our lineage, we extend a special invitation to you—researchers, clinicians, and educators—so that, through the submission of articles, essays, experience reports, and reviews, we may together sustain and nurture knowledge that dialogues with René Kaës's legacy and with the central themes of relational psychoanalysis: groups, families, couples, institutions, psychic transmission, unconscious alliances, and relational configurations. *Vínculo* remains committed to welcoming and disseminating works that deepen, question, and proliferate knowledge, keeping alive—through the movement of writing and transmission—the legacy entrusted to us by Kaës.

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