

**TRAINING TO RESIST, LEARNING NOT TO CHANGE:  
FREUD'S GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT IN ANALYSIS**

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*“To me it appears to be the greatest disappointment in analysis that it does not effect a greater change in the analysts themselves. No one has yet made it a subject of study by what means analysts succeed in evading the influence of the analysis on their own person.”* (Excerpt of Freud's letter to Foulkes of 1. 5. 1932).

As a medical educator and an analytic therapist I have been intrigued for many years by the difficulties involved in the training of the health professionals. I adopted group methods to study the development of professional attitudes in medical students. After seven years of research I resigned my position as Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the Medical School. By then I had discovered that it was from the very same educational system from which the undesirable attitudes sprang that the students learned and we were said to want to correct with our teaching. We were fostering resistances to learn and we were teaching students to change in the wrong direction, although the educational system we ourselves had developed attempted to do the opposite. This is why I gave up “acting out” as a medical educator.

*“To educate, to treat and to govern are the three “impossible professions” to which Freud in his writings frequently equates Psycho-Analysis, and in all of which –he added– we can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfactory results. The last time Freud made reference to the subject was two years before his death, in chapter VIII of his 1937 “Analysis terminable and interminable”. Here, I think, he tallies his life dedication as a teacher, as a therapist and as a ruler of analysts in training. The result? That the latter are incurable, un-trainable, un-rulable. They just don't change by training analysis! The remedy? More of the same, analysis every five years, analysis interminable!*

S. H. Foulkes, also, after a life time dedication to the study of how and why qualified analysts do not change, a year before his death sums up his experience. He had been encouraged to do this study from early on in his career by the response he received from Freud to his tentative hypothesis that if analysts do not change and evade the effect of analysis on themselves, it is because they have learned to pass the buck to their analysands. Foulkes was better equipped than Freud to do this study thanks to the groupanalytic instrument he himself discovered, and which he always thought was the best of situations for observing the processes of therapy and of learning. His conclusions? They are laid out in “Qualifications as a Psychoanalyst...” The trainees develop in the course of their training a set of resistances which, in front of the group situation, lead them to adopt defenses which tend to approximate this new situation to the one of Psycho-Analysis which is familiar to them.

The question is though: Did Foulkes do better than Freud? Was he inclined to learn from his own experience and from his own mistakes, or did he not? Theoretically he did, when he said that therapy

and learning are related, overlapping, complementary processes, the two sides of the same coin, and that they are based on un-learning, on de-learning what was learned beforehand.

But, did he in practice learn something new? I have recently written a paper –*“The teachings of S.H. Foulkes: A group-analytic orientation to the training of psychotherapists”*– soon to be published, in which I claim that he did. But now, five years after his death, here between us, in this discussion in the familiar setting of our Symposium, do we think that this is so?

The Institute of Group Analysis is the part of the group-analytic organization which grew around S.H. Foulkes, entrusted specifically with the teaching of this new science and method of psychotherapy and with the training of qualified analysts. As we know, the April issue of this year’s GAIPAC reports about it at length. The Group Analytic Society, the mother institution of all those others which sprung from S. H. Foulkes’ work is going through pains with the adolescent organization it engendered. Besides, as a young widow, with father no longer around to settle the disputes, the Society does not know exactly what to do.

So, one of the eldest kids, Dr. Robin Skynner, a fast runner on questions of change, threw back to the family a paradoxical question: *Are we tempted to take a U-turn back towards psychoanalysis and its limitations?* And further, after sharing with us his believe that *“innovators in the field of psychotherapy pass on their most positive contributions through their ideas, while their limitations, of which they are unaware and of which their students are unconsciously taught to be unaware, are passed on in their technique”*, he invites us to study the limitations Foulkes transmitted in his technique. As a good and active family therapist, with the purpose of rocking the boat but not of sinking it, Skynner throws back to us this provocative question: *“Do we want to be followers, which requires that we avoid seeing his limitations, or do we want to build on what he has been able to give us, which requires that we see him more objectively?”* O.K. I take the challenge! I said. But since I would like to go about it group-analytically, I think we better start by rephrasing this challenge within the context of the group. As Foulkes would say: *“Wrong questions will lead to wrong answers, and pseudo-problems into pseudo-solutions”*. And I say: *“Questions out of context will lead nowhere.”*

First of all, I would not agree with Dr. Skynner that his thesis is applicable to the case of Foulkes. I think that Foulkes’ ideas are better reflected and expressed in his methods than in his writings. We all know that he was not a talented writer. Or, maybe he was after all! He certainly had not an easy pen; but each time that I read him again, I find myself reading into his writings new things. Is that part of his “Confucius-nal” style of teaching? Confucius, the one who taught only people who were eager to learn, who helped nobody who was not anxious to explain himself, the one who showed only one corner of a subject and let man go on to discover the other three, and also the one who never repeated the lesson. I feel that also for group analysis, the most practical thing is a good theory, but Foulkes’ limitation of not writing the theory book he had promised, after all is said and done may be a gift. We don’t have a Bible which to impede our group from growing. Maybe it is group authorship what is needed in our case, and I feel that this is an urgent task to be carried out by our group.

The second point is: I don’t think that Foulkes’ limitations are the only ones to be considered. Ours are as important or maybe even more than his. Is our group to be an autocratic group, based on the pecking order of the ones-who-are-supposed-to-know-better or the ones-who-arrived-first? Or else are we aiming at a more democratic organization, run by the people, which interact and honestly communicate in the free agora of the group? Is it the pecking order of power, or is it the koinonic development of citizenry at which our group should aim?

Thirdly, the last but not least of all questions: Where are we heading for? To growth through change, or to building a citadel to resist? The motto of the psychoanalytic movement *“Fluctuat nec mergitur”* which Freud took from the shield of the city of Paris, written under the image of a vessel, is a good motto for

the capital of a country whose last and most heroic feat was “La Resistance”, but as far as sailing and going places is concerned it is good for a buoy but not for a ship.

When I considered contributing with a communication to this Symposium on Aspects of Resistance in Group-Analytic Practice, I chose the title “Training, the “*Maginot*” of Analysis and its “ ‘Grosse Berta’, the Qualifying Machine”. I set myself to compare side by side Freud's and Foulkes' fundamental papers on the topic, ending with a very long and scholarly paper fit to be published but not to be read.<sup>i</sup> So I decided that the best thing to do was to sum up my conclusions to be discussed with you here:

I started from the basic idea that the best of educational systems for the training of analytical therapists don't succeed unless its end product —the analysts it qualifies— are genuinely qualified analysts, and here I make no distinction between psycho- , group-, family- or whatever type of analysts. Also, it should be noted that to qualify differs from being qualified. To qualify is to be fit for an occupation, for doing a job well; while to be qualified is rather related to professional licensure, to have the legal right to call oneself an analyst or to be a member of a specific society.

What are the requirements for qualifying as an analyst? That definition I take from the founder of founders, Sigmund Freud himself, and from what I consider his final appraisal of his life as a teacher of analysts: Chapter VII of *Analysis Terminable...*, that ode to therapeutic pessimism which he left as a will:

*“This alone (having finalized his training analysis) would not suffice for his instruction, but we reckon on the stimuli he has received in his own analysis not ceasing when it ends and on the processes of remodeling the ego continuing spontaneously in the analyzed subject and making use of all its subsequent experiences in this newly-acquired sense. This does and in fact happens and in so far as it happens it makes the analyzed subject qualified to be an analyst himself.”*

So obviously, learning to learn, under new and different circumstances, and learning how not to resist possible and required changes according to the situation, are the true criteria for Freud to qualify as an analyst. However, this satisfactory result is so rarely achieved in the training of analysts that he had to make the following comment in the subsequent paragraph to which I already made reference:

*“Unfortunately, something else happens as well. It seems that a number of analysts learn to make use of defensive mechanisms which allow them to divert the implication and demands of analysis from themselves (probably by directing them on to other people), so that they themselves remain as they are and are able to withdraw from the critical and corrective influence of analysis.”*

With S. H. Foulkes it seems that the first was the case. He was able to move from the psychoanalytic situation of two into the group-analytic of many without having to stop to neither analyze nor become defensive about it. But, did the “other unfortunate thing” also happen? Yes and no. We will see.

S. H. Foulkes seems to have read into this text the confirmation to the question he tentatively had put to Freud in a letter five years before. Early in 1932, Foulkes thought that “by analyzing others, analysts defend themselves against recovery and cling tenaciously to illness and suffering”, and what is more, “they do it not only like the patient but perhaps through the patient.”

What sort of patients had Freud and later Foulkes in mind? Ordinary patients or candidates? Training analysts? All this reminds me of an old joke in medical education: “Those who are not good physicians become medical educators, and those who are not good teachers become experts in medical education!” If we read carefully Freud's text, what it adds up to is that to qualify as a psychoanalyst does not always happen and if it does happen it is by mere chance. What happens always is that they learn to use defensive mechanisms against learning, against recovery, against

change. That is why –and not only because of the industrial hazard of the profession– Freud universally recommends analysis interminable, analysis *interruptus*, once every five years minimum.

S. H. Foulkes was one of those *raras avis* of “analyzed subjects qualified to be an analyst himself.” He was very proud of not having had to follow Freud's advice of analysis *interruptus* for ever. Maybe, Helene Deutsch, after all, learned her lesson in her analysis of Tausk. Who knows? The fact is that Foulkes became very sensitive about the risks of transference neurosis and of transferring transference neurosis to others. In his own words:

*“I can well believe that this happy result (what it takes to be qualified as an analyst) is not too frequently achieved, but I doubt that if it is not, further analysis, however often repeated, will bring it about. I suspect that the interminable analysis will produce more interminable analysis in turn.”*

His prediction seems to have been confirmed: “... With the emphasis on transference analysis, psychoanalysis has been extended in time. The analysis of transference neurosis is more and more a central preoccupation. There seems to me a danger that the neurosis swallows up the analysis. In theory the dissolution of the transference is the aim, but in practice, this ideally does not often occur, to put it mildly.” (My underlying)

But did he learn as well not to “transfer” the old psychoanalytical training system from where he came from to the training organization which developed around him? He knew how to avoid this danger: The future psychoanalyst should have a basic training in group analysis first, and if possible previous to his psychoanalytic training proper:

*“... In my opinion, which I have often expressed, the sequence would better be as indicated here: to undergo group analysis first, and then work this experience through in the two person situation. It would be desirable that this analysis should not be as prolonged as is often the case in professional psychoanalysis, but should be more in the nature of one or two years length.” (ii)*

But, why did he have to stop short his recommendation and not extend it to the training of professional psychoanalysts? I have pondered about this question for many years and it inspired most of my studies on the subject of Psycho-Analysis as an institution. What held Foulkes back of giving this final step was not his past training as an analyst but his situation as a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society and his reluctance to inaugurate “yet another neo-analytic school of thought.”

If we analyze the nature of resistances Foulkes says, in “*Qualifications...*”, analysts develop, we realize that most of them are Super-Ego resistances, Ego-ideal resistances, a sort of massive projective identification with the Master, Professor Freud, on which pioneer groups of analysts are built. Down through the analytical family tree, like in the Catholic Church, those identifications are chain transmitted from training analyst to trained analyst. That is why I say in my paper “*Psychoanalysis: The Institution of Denial*”: “Once a trained analyst, always a tamed analyst”. Psychoanalysis as a group institutionalizes through transference the basic assumption of pairing, the one which Bion says aristocracy fulfills within society. That is why incest –like in ancient royal families– remains untouched within the psychoanalytic organization.

Freud never had a chance to secure a fair analysis for himself, neither Foulkes a groupanalysis. That is the destiny of the founders! Freud never overcame his conflictive identification with his mother institution: Medicine, neither Foulkes his own with Psychoanalysis. It seems that transference –the most resilient of resistances– is equally applicable to people as to institutions. On what do I base my suppositions, you will ask. In the case of Foulkes specifically, on that for him the problem of transference in group analysis still remains the most obscure of topics to be solved. He gets mixed up in

a play with capital T, Tr, and small t and x, which is quite confusing, as is his famous sentence: *“Training analysts are familiar with the intensity and subtlety with which his trainee repeats his own unresolved and reactivated conflicts with his own patients in turn, not only in projective reversal of his own warded off transference neurosis, but in genuine interaction with his patient's neurosis.”* Also, symptomatically, it shows in the way he writes Group Analysis –two separate words– or in the wording he chose for the training institution he founded: The Institute of Group Analysis (London). Further, he said: *“There is no intrinsic reason why psychoanalysis should not in a future extend its dimension and claim that group analysis is psychoanalysis in the multipersonal situation. If and when this should be stated it would become clear however, that the whole of psychoanalytic theory and practice would have to be changed, and far removed from the mind and intention of its originator. We do not wish to inaugurate yet another neo-analytic school of thought”*. Adding: *“For the time being we think as psychoanalysts that this discipline has an important function to fulfill on its own grounds... In the meantime we firmly reject the idea that experiences in group psychotherapy should be limited by present day psychoanalytic concepts. Group analysis is free to develop within the larger framework of psychotherapy. Its effects inside this have been described as a revolution.”*

It is my feeling that the greatest of limitations of Foulkes and his professional drama in life was his ambivalence in bringing about a revolution in psychoanalysis. He was too much of a conservative to do so and, besides, in England there never was a chance. He developed a method and some principles, but he did not dare go as far as put down in a book all the theoretical ideas that naturally sprang from his technique. The defensive trick he used against a psychoanalytic revolution was the one of the man with many hats. Identified with the Founder, we take the risk of ending up with our heads split in two? Foulkes' problem of loyalties should not be our own. Many of us owe no loyalty to organized psychoanalysis or, maybe by the same token, neither to organized group analysis as training and licensing institutions. We have no reason to resist because we don't have an institutional transference from where to depart. What we should be concerned with is if we qualify as analysts or not. So, in Foulkes' words, *“the day there are enough analysts trained both as psychoanalysts and as group analysts”*, we can dream of being really revolutionary as a group in analytic theory, in technique and, why not, in training as well. I think the time is now ripe for it!

Meanwhile what happens? We go on with our inferiority complex of “second best analysts”: analysis is better than psychotherapy and of course, psychoanalysis –if possible ten years long and five times a week– is better than group analysis in a group of eight and a duration of maximum three years, twice a week. That holds true for our patients, that holds true for ourselves regards therapy, and regards training as well!

If psychoanalysis is best, or better than group analysis, and that may be true, it is because as psychoanalysts we study more, we read more, we think more and we invest more in an unsolvable transference neurosis than we do as group analysts. I am convinced that within any organized analytic society the hierarchical order is maintained through the institutionalization of power and through mind control thanks to transference. This transference, however, is not only the primary transference of our original personal and family neurosis of our personal analysis, but also the iatrogenic, didactic transference, the one caught on the couch during training analysis, transference which in turn our didactic analyst caught on his. Of course, like with the story of the chicken and the egg, it is absolutely necessary that one personally decides which came first.

The discipline within its ranks, like in the Army and the Church, in analytical societies comes from identification with the leading ideas and/or the person of the founders and the group pressure to conformity. What is more, the ones who qualify, who recognize or not if the other is qualified, are those who rise to the top on the hierarchical ladder of power. I see here today many distinguished group analysts from many lands –England, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Denmark– who count with a long

and rich experience of training and being trained. Many of you have your own organizations, societies and institutes. I see myself and a small group of Spaniards back home struggling to set up our own system yet. We aspire to set up a training scheme and the sort of organization that does not perpetuate, through transference, the same mistakes of the organizations by which one day we were trained. Friends, can you tell me if, in your institutions, you have managed not to use the same resistances and defenses you as individual analysts have been taught in the situation of two? If this is the case, please be kind enough to tell us how, it would be of great help. Unfortunately, I feel that we are still a long way from unlearning how not to train analysts for resistance and to learn the tricks of how not to change in spite of analysis. Let us see if we can find the way. I think that this is the challenge for analysis in the eighties. Thank you.

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- i S. Freud's: "Recommendations to Physicians" of 1912, "Lines of Advance...", "On the Teaching of Psychoanalysis in the University" of 1915, and "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" of 1937 & S. H. Foulkes': "Psychotherapy in the Sixties", 1963, "Group Analysis: Method and Principles", & "Qualifications as Psychoanalyst as an Asset as well as a Hindrance for the future Group Analyst", both of 1975.
- ii G.A. VIII/3, 75, pp. 181.