

# BEYOND DICHOTOMY: THE ORIENTATION OF TRIGANT BURROW<sup>1</sup>

by

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The Eleventh Congress of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy took place from August 22-28, 1992, in Montreal, on the topic of Love and Hate. Through the efforts of the Lifwynn Foundation's advisor, Juan Campos, vice president of the Association and chairperson of Grup d'Anàlisi, Barcelona, Spain, a Symposium entitled "Beyond Dichotomy: The Orientation of Trigant Burrow" was held at the Congress on August 25.

Juan Campos, after briefly introducing the speakers and the subject of the Symposium, expanded on what he had already written for the Book of Abstracts of the Congress in the following terms

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<sup>1</sup> Campos, J. (1992). Beyond dichotomy: the orientation of Trigant Burrow. *Lifwynn Correspondence* 2/2, pp. 2-9.  
See: Campos, J. (1992). Burrow, Foulkes and Freud: An Historical Perspective. *Lifwynn Correspondence*. Vol. 2, n°2, August 1992

At the Spring Meeting in Montreal in 1940, the American Psychoanalytic Association bestowed the Abraham A. Brill Memorial Medal on Dr. Trigant Burrow, as one of its living ex-presidents. The rendering of this small token reparation is quite paradoxical, to the man who, in 1933, had been denied membership in the New York Society, thus being expelled from the Association. Burrow, though, excused himself from being present to accept this "honor" in person. Why he did so will forever remain a secret. Maybe he just wanted to spare everybody embarrassment.

Trigant Burrow (1875-1950) was the first American-born practitioner of psychoanalysis; together with Carl Jung, they co-invented "didactic analysis;" in Zurich in 1910 and he was the only American present in Nuremberg in 1910 as a charter member of both the IPA and the American Psychoanalytic Association. Burrow was also the discoverer of our "social neurosis" and one of its remedies: "group analysis."

The 500th anniversary of the discovery of America coincides with the diamond anniversary of one of the greatest American discoveries in psychoanalysis: it is seventy-five years since Trigant Burrow, together with Clarence Shields, initiated the "mutual analysis" out of which was to develop group analysis, the forerunner of all future group therapies. Ten years later, as an enlarged group, they established the "analytic community," a "commune in group analysis," in order to study our common social neurosis.

The IAGP is honored that this "most ancient" of all group therapy organizations --and the only one to remain ever since a "study group in group analysis" has applied for membership to our Association and will join as one more of the study groups of the network whose committee I chair. It is emblematic that this should happen here in Montreal, so close to Lifwynn Camp on Lake Chateaugay in the Adirondacks of Upstate New York, the summer research station where the first experiments in group analysis took place in the early twenties.

Our new organizational colleague, The Lifwynn Foundation for Laboratory Research in Analytic and Social Psychiatry (as it was originally called) was and still is, I am afraid, the only social body of this kind to systematically apply to itself the same procedures they provide for others. Many of us are eager to know about this group analysis and its origins, how it managed to survive, where it stands today and where it is heading in the future. Mostly I hope they will help to solve the problems around love and hate that the world is facing at this moment.

Ignoring the work of Burrow and his associates, Sigmund Freud in 1929, in one of those "epochs of civilization, or possibly a time when the whole of mankind had become neurotic," agreed that an attempt to carry psychoanalysis over to the cultural community was not absurd or doomed to be fruitless. He even conceded that *"an analytic dissection of such neuroses might lead to therapeutic recommendations which could lay claim to great practical interest...we may expect,"* concluded Freud, *"that one day someone will venture to embark upon a pathology of cultural communities?"* Those who dared such a venture found that it not only was a question of practical interest but implied a theoretical breakthrough which leads into a new scientific Weltanschauung.

Trigant Burrow's findings were reported in over 100 books and papers by himself and his associates and still very few people know about him or his work.

One of the few exceptions is S. H. Foulkes, the man who borrowed the term "group analysis" to name his own group psychotherapeutic procedure, in the conviction that Burrow had abandoned it in the thirties when he coined the denomination phyloanalysis to describe his group method.

When in April 1946, Foulkes presented his work with groups during the war to the British Psychoanalytical Society, he started his talk "On Group Analysis" by saying: *"It has been rightly said that group therapy has a very long past and a very short history. To compare and contrast different methods might prove confusing. Until very recently I only knew by hearsay of the work done by others and my knowledge of it is patchy at present. I may, therefore, take it that you are interested in having*

*some information about the development of group treatment as I know from my own experience....I want, however, to make it clear that in confining myself to my own work, I am doing so for lack of adequate knowledge and not from any disregard or disrespect for the work done by others."*

In this report Foulkes went to pains to avoid any connection of his [group analysis] work with the man who coined the term, Trigant Burrow; and went so far as to attribute its paternity to Karl Mannheim. The latter takes it on board in the chapter dedicated to group analysis in his "Diagnosis of Our Time" (1943), where reference to Trigant Burrow is omitted. Still more startling is, however, that after a few years Foulkes not only had overcome this initial refusal to recognize his predecessor, but then never ceased stating that the idea of group analysis as a form of treatment was put into his mind by reading a paper of Trigant Burrow in the mid-twenties.

Of course, Foulkes was no historian. The historian in group analysis is E. James Anthony who, in *Comprehensive Group Psychotherapy*, states that history can be written in at least two different ways: just to tell it as it happened or to reconstruct it in the context of present day theory and practice. He sided for the latter by stating that:

*"The essence of the dynamic historical method is to select the significant facts of history and arrange them within a temporal sequence. Inevitably, some manipulation is involved in this selection and arrangement, but there must be no distortion of the facts. The clinical historian must be ready to admit that, although he may have a bias in his arrangement of facts, he is still able to recognize other perspectives, even when they contradict his own thesis. Like the good therapist, he should be able to see in this multiplicity of incompatible perspectives not failure or foolishness but the very richness of life..."<sup>3</sup>*

If this symposium is taking place here today, it is because, during 1986-87 there arose within the pages of Group Analysis a heated controversy regarding the person and work of Trigant Burrow. It was prompted by a book review of Trigant Burrow: *Toward Social Sanity and Human Survival*, a selection of his writings compiled by Alfreda S. Galt for Horizon Press, New York, in 1984. Burrow is well known for his description of social neurosis and what he calls the 'I-person' complex that shows up in groups as well as in individuals. Alfreda Galt's book unleashed in the reviewer, J. Roberts, such an attack of social neurosis that the editor of Group Analysis felt compelled to remedy this by presenting in the same issue Max Rosenbaum's more positive view of Burrow's work. J. Roberts, after recognizing that he found some of the jargon hard to stomach--particularly neologisms introduced by Burrow, such as cotention and ditention--and recognizing that the book had prompted in him an aversion to Burrow and his works which he was sure was irrational, concluded that one must read these pioneering authors in their entirety or not at all. This was a very Freudian reaction, as we will see later on. On the contrary, Max Rosenbaum—who has read Burrow's work encompassing his whole professional career and who already in 1960, on the occasion of the publication of *A Search for Man's Sanity*, had made an extensive review of Burrow's life and work—concluded his article in Group Analysis with the following paragraph: *"Galt's book is a brief sampling of Burrow's theories, but the book should serve as a stimulus to read his full works. Galt has added an excellent glossary to her brief synopsis of Burrow's work and this should be of immense aid to the reader who is unfamiliar with Burrow as a pioneer. It is time he received his long overdue recognition. Begin with reading Galt's book."*

Good and bad, right and wrong, are typical polarities of the "I"-persona. In the following issue of Group Analysis, however, a third party joined in the discussion—another American pioneer of group psychotherapy and, obviously, a militant Freudian psychoanalyst, Dr. Saul Scheidlinger, who most authoritatively took exception to Rosenbaum's conclusions as to why Burrow has failed to attract support from most of his psychoanalytic and psychiatric colleagues. One of the main points of Rosenbaum's thesis, although not the central one, is the fact that Burrow had chosen Jung as his analyst—which did not endear him to Freud who could be extremely critical and hold deep-seated

resentments— and that Freud's resentments towards Jung rubbed off onto Burrow. Saul Scheidlinger said, *"There is considerable evidence for the notion that Freud's opposition to Burrow, beginning in the early twenties...was primarily due to Burrow's increasing deviation in theory and clinical practice from what was then deemed to be the established approach. Thus, Burrow's idea of a social neurosis encompassing both the patient and the analyst, written... in a language with its own semantic rights, were highly suspect. In addition, his practice of lumping together patients, coworkers, students and family members, including children, into his 'analytic' groups came to be widely perceived as eccentric if not unethical."* There are many more such statements in Saul Scheidlinger's commentaries, but what is really amazing is his conclusion: "In sum, I believe that not unlike the once highly regarded Wilhelm Reich whose 'going too far' with his orgone enterprises lost him the membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association, Burrow's abstruse physiological perspectives and global aims to solve society's ills, enunciated in his later years, lead to a similar fate and caused some of his uniquely original ideas to be ignored. I have a strong hunch that Burrow, who over many years kept besieging Freud with reprints and letters with extravagant claims for his group methods, became the unwitting cause for Freud's dropping forever the theme of group psychology, quite suddenly, after having written an impressive treatise about it in 1921.<sup>4</sup>

Amazing! This is how history is written. Of course, that led Max Rosenbaum to reply and, in turn, Saul Scheidlinger to reply to Max Rosenbaum, until, finally, the whole issue was smoothed over with a soft reply from the editor of the book, Alfreda Galt. In her reply she said quite gently: "I feel that he (J. Roberts) approached the book with an open mind and is frank and explicit about why he found it wanting. I do not argue with this opinion but I would like to speak a word in Burrow's defense on the use of neologisms, particularly the terms cotention and ditention which Dr. Roberts 'found hard to stomach.' These words were introduced to define the contrasting modes of attention and feeling which Dr. Burrow observed and demarcated in the course of his group research. Everyday language did not contain words or phrases to describe these somatically distinctive patterns and, like other investigators in new fields, Burrow coined words to fill the gap." Actually Trigant Burrow coined many other terms beside cotention and ditention, such as "social neurosis" and "group analysis" which last term he never disclaimed.

We should be thankful to the editor of Group Analysis for having given "the word" a chance to be treated group-analytically in the pages of that journal. This proved that the spirit of old GAIPAC (Group Analysis International Panel and Correspondence) was not at all dead and buried. Personally, Max Rosenbaum's piece there led me to The Lifwynn Foundation in Westport, Connecticut, and to the discovery that not only is this organization still alive, but that it was the first psychoanalytical learning community and the first study group in analysis. I mean that literally. It is the only one that through its Constitution applies to its own social organization and administration the very same group analytical principles carried out in their studies of personal and social neuroses everywhere. Kurt Goldstein, maestro of Foulkes, wrote to Burrow on one occasion: "You are one of the few scientists who make one feel that for him life and work are closely related."<sup>5</sup> I have a very similar feeling about the people I met in Westport, and at Bailey Farms during the Lifwynn Conference on Addiction--those engaged in the Lifwynn Project 1989-92 which is to be discussed in this symposium.

We are not here to eulogize Trigant Burrow or The Lifwynn Foundation —or to blame anybody. I have learned that it is not your fault or my fault when we cannot think along, feel along together. The impairment for cooperative action —the social neurosis— lies in the system and we are all part of that system. Freud was, Burrow was, Foulkes was and we still are in forced connivance to support all that goes against human health and healthy development. What I do hope we achieve here is simply a longer history for group analysis, and an even longer future for the study groups of group analysis.

Much has been written as to why Trigant Burrow was ostracized first by Freud and then by the psychoanalytic community. To do justice to these occurrences one should go to the Freud/Burrow

correspondence which is archived at Yale University. I did so; and there I found also the correspondence of S. H. Foulkes with Hans Syz, long-time president of The Lifwynn Foundation. Regarding the latter correspondence, which clarifies the relationship of Foulkes' ideas with those of Burrow, I shall write on another occasion. Now, however, I would like to quote a few paragraphs that give us a hint about an issue that very much puzzled both Freud and Foulkes.

In my Rome position paper on institutional resistances to group analysis, I began by quoting the following paragraph from Freud's letter to Foulkes of May 1, 1932: "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 a subject of study the means by which analysts succeed in evading the influence of analysis on their own persons.<sup>6</sup>"

In 1937, in Chapter 7 of *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, Freud makes an attempt in this direction. He states: "This alone [completion of his training analysis] would not suffice for his instruction; but we reckon on the stimuli that he has received in his own analysis not ceasing when it ends and on the processes of remodelling the ego continuing spontaneously in the analysed subject and making use of all subsequent experiences in this newly-acquired sense. This does in fact happen, and in so far as it happens it makes the analysed subject qualified to be an analyst himself.<sup>7</sup>"

For Freud, obviously, learning to learn under new and different circumstances, and learning how not to resist possible changes required by the situation, are the criteria by which an analyst is qualified. However, it may be seen in the paragraph that follows [the above quotation], this satisfactory result is rarely achieved by training analysis: "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 implications and demands of analysis from themselves (probably by directing them onto other people), so that they themselves remain as they are and are able to withdraw from the critical and corrective influence of analysis.<sup>8</sup>"

S. H. Foulkes seems to have read in this text the confirmation to the question that he tentatively had put to Freud in the letter which brought the above-mentioned answer from Freud. 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 so not only "like the patient but perhaps through the patient." It can be considered that Foulkes dedicated his lifetime to studying how not only patients but also analysts change and do not change. By 1975, however, he concluded: "I can well believe that this happy result (which is necessary for one to be a qualified analyst) is not too frequently achieved, but if it is not, I doubt [whether] further analysis, however, often repeated, will bring it about. I suspect that the interminable analysis will, in turn, produce more interminable analysis.

This concern about the qualifications of the psychoanalyst does not seem to have been far from the mind of Freud in his correspondence with Trigant Burrow and, maybe, this was the main reason for not being able to understand him. If we go back to this correspondence, we can extract the following excerpts of August 15, 1926: "*I see you are grappling with an important, still unsolved problem, but I have made no progress in understanding how you manage it. A plain and clear description of the way your laboratory-method is performed, would help me more than all your theoretical speculation and your reference to the Theory of Relativity which to me seems out of place.*"<sup>9</sup>

Freud's answer, instead of discouraging Burrow, prompted him to this enthusiastic response of October 16, 1926:

*"Dear Professor Freud: I was indeed glad to have your letter of August 15th....It heartens me very much to know that you realize something of the difficulty of the work I have undertaken. When you write me that you are interested in my publications and realize that I am 'grappling with an important, still unsolved problem,..."*<sup>10</sup>

In response to this, on November 14, 1926, Trigant Burrow received from Freud his final appraisal which I quote in full:

*"Dear Dr. Burrow: I would not like you to form an incorrect idea of my position regarding your innovations. My final judgment I must naturally withhold until I have a better insight into your technique, but my expectations are not at all favorable to you. At the present time I do not believe that the analysis of a patient can be conducted in any other way than in the family situation, that is, limited to two people. The mass situation will either result immediately in a leader and those led by him, that is, it will become similar to the family situation but entailing great difficulties in the function of expression and unnecessary complications of jealousy and competition, or it will bring into effect the "brother hood" where everybody has the same right and where, I believe, an analytical influence is impossible.*

*I have in general the impression that you let yourself be led too far by speculative analogies and that you neglect practically significant differences in favor of certain correspondences. I think back with displeasure to your attempt to transfer the viewpoints of the theory of relativity into psychology. The neuroses of society cannot be simply identified with the neuroses of the individual. One would better compare them with the distortions of character and with inhibitions of the single individual. I do not believe that we should be grateful to you for the fact that you want to extend our therapeutic task to improving the world.*

*The unsolved problem toward whose clarifications I see you are working is probably the defining of the requirements which have to be demanded from the practicing analyst. It is apparent that he has to be different from other people and, on the other hand, one cannot demand from him the realization of those ideals which are most difficult to fulfill. With my great respect, (signed) Freud. <sup>11</sup>"*

Tomorrow, in the meeting of the Study Group on Group Analysis I will make the proposal to explore up to what point the work of Trigant Burrow is still relevant to the solution of the problems that as group analysts we are facing today. After all, maybe Anthony<sup>12</sup> is right when he concludes the paragraph I quoted above with the following reflections:

*"The ultimate lesson from history, therefore, is that for coherent, logical development in a discipline, one must constantly and consistently remember where he came from and where he is going. The past is conglomerate, complex, confabulatory, and conflictual, but it is incumbent on every worker to resolve these perplexities and complexities for himself and, by so doing, discover his own professional identity and ultimate purpose. Each group psychotherapist must become his own historian and thread his way with open-mindedness and relative impartiality through the shoals of psychobiologically, improbable, mythological, mystical, and paralogical ideas of the past and present, asking his own questions and seeking his own answers within the totality of what is known or imagined. He has to undertake this job for himself, since no one can do it for him."*

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- <sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*. CW, James Strachey, (ed.) Vol. XXI. London: The Hogarth Press, 1961, P. 144.
- <sup>3</sup> E. James Anthony. "The History of Group Psychotherapy," in *Comprehensive Group Psychotherapy*, Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, Eds. Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1971, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>4</sup> *Group Analysis*. Vol. 19, No. 2, P. 188.
- <sup>5</sup> *Group Analysis*. Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 75-76.
- <sup>6</sup> William Galt et al, Eds. *A Search for Man's Sanity: The Selected Letters of Trigant Burrow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, P. 69.
- <sup>7</sup> *Group Analysis*. Vol. 13, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud: *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. CW, James Strachey, ed., Vol. XXIII. London: The Hogarth Press, 1964, pp. 248-49.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, P. 249.
- <sup>10</sup> Unpublished letter, Trigant Burrow Papers, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
- <sup>11</sup> William Galt et al, Eds. *A Search for Man's Sanity: The Selected Letters of Trigant Burrow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, P. 149.
- <sup>12</sup> E. James Anthony. "The History of Group Psychotherapy," in *Comprehensive Group Psychotherapy*, Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, Eds. Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1971, P. 5.