

How Can Group Analysis Become an Academic Discipline? ¹

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Abstract

In this article, I shall consider the issue whether when and how a clinical practice of psychotherapy can become an academic discipline: this represents the move from a training designed to prepare competent practitioners for the rigours of clinical practice to the in-depth study of a subject in an academic setting.

Key words: psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, academic study, theory, group analysis



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Before I deal with group analysis, I shall review the academic study of other forms of psychotherapy, principally psychoanalysis.

The dynamic psychotherapies were formed and forged in the heat of the consulting rooms of Vienna, Zurich, Budapest, Berlin and London, later in North America, followed by the Mediterranean and Latin countries (Zaretsky, 2004). At first, they were circles of students of followers who surrounded the founding fathers — Freud, Jung, Ferenczi, Abraham and Jones. Membership of these circles followed acceptance by the central figure whose authority was revered and the significance of membership was deepened through the initiatory rites of personal therapy with the Master and his close disciples, though personal analysis was not required for psychoanalytic training until Nunberg proposed this in 1926. Ambivalently, Freud sought academic recognition, hence his long flirtation with Bleuler and Jung, the prestigious non-Jewish Swiss University professors. Ferenczi had a brief appointment as Professor of Psychoanalysis in Budapest, during the short-lived communist regime that followed the First World War, but the systematic teaching of psychoanalysis began at the Berlin Institute in the 1920s under Karl Abraham. But it was not until the post-Second World War era that psychoanalysis was recognized in academic settings, principally in North America where suddenly it was accepted in psychiatric and psychological circles. Some knowledge of psychoanalytic theory and practice became mandatory in many universities. Academic studies flourished and this began the divergence between clinical and academic trainings. Psychoanalysis became the subject of intense theoretical and experimental studies, many of which have been discarded, such as Rappaport' s ambitious effort to establish psychoanalysis as a general psychology and the many laboratory studies of defence mechanisms. Some universities offered training in psychoanalysis as both an academic and a clinical subject, but these received relatively little support and have died out. Psychoanalysis has lost ground in North American psychiatry and psychology, where biological psychiatry and cognitive psychology have gained ground.

In Britain, many universities now organize courses in psychoanalytic studies. For the most part, these are devoted to theory, often linked to cultural studies, to literature and art, where speculation can safely flourish away from clinical responsibility. Many of these courses have a strong Lacanian influence. With these courses there are now many possibilities to obtain university degrees at Masters level and also to work to Doctorates.

Clinical and Academic Trainings

I shall now differentiate the elements of clinical and academic trainings. I will begin with theories of knowledge where we have what are known as the coherence and correspondence theories. A coherent theory is one that looks at itself to establish internal consistency: A correspondence theory looks to see in what way it is compatible with other corresponding fields of study. The one is largely internal, the other external. Thus, a correspondence theory of psychoanalysis will concern itself with epistemology, with movements in culture and with attempts to become part of academic developmental studies. Clinical training will favour the coherent approach and the study will principally be internal, of their own theories. This is still the predominant model in psychoanalytic trainings, which are still to a considerable extent taught in private institutions outside the universities, separate from corresponding fields of study.

I refer to the theory and practice established by S.H. Foulkes during and after the Second World War. This was the era of the birth of group psychotherapy both in Europe and North America. As a psychiatrist, Foulkes had studied with Kurt Goldstein, the gestalt neuropsychiatrist who made very considerable advances in the understanding of brain functioning and its relationship to the whole person — a gestalt and holistic approach (Pines, 1998).

Following this, Foulkes trained as a psychoanalyst in Vienna and experienced exile, leaving Germany for England, where he had to integrate the difference between psychoanalysis, as taught in Vienna, and the English school of London, led by Ernest Jones, Edward Glover and Melanie Klein. Before leaving Germany, he had practised in Frankfurt, where he made a significant connection with the sociologist Norbert Elias and had some contact with the Frankfurt school of critical sociology. Influenced by this, he gave primacy to the social in both the normal and abnormal development of the individual and valued the group approach as a means to explore and to repair psychological damage arising from early or current intrapsychic and interpersonal conflicts. His wartime experience of therapeutic community work, where he met and collaborated with many significant figures of post-war English psychiatry, helped to form and to forge this new synthesis (Dalal, 1998). After the war, the study of group analysis began classically with a small study circle centred on Foulkes; later, more systematic clinical trainings were organized by younger colleagues, to meet the demands of mental health professionals, who had received relatively little basic training in psychotherapy to help them with their very considerable clinical burdens. Some years later, the Institute of Group Analysis was founded with the aim of offering in-depth theoretical and clinical training for students to qualify for independent work and responsibility. This is a lengthy training that takes over four years, for which we are seeking, and have received, academic recognition from London University at the Masters Level.

I return now to compare the aims and methods of clinical and academic training.

Clinical Training

Here the purpose and function is to train competent practitioners to a standard that will be acceptable not only to the training organization, but, nowadays, must also be acceptable to the authorities who register practitioners of psychotherapy and counselling in the United Kingdom and in the European community. These authorities also require training organizations to have a code of ethics and to organize appeal procedures, and standards of training are examined at regular intervals. At the Institute of Group Analysis there is a three-year syllabus for theory, which covers individual and group development, psychopathology and the practice of group work in different settings. Students are taught for six hours a week in three yearly semesters. The theory is relevant to practice; consideration is given to the history of theory and to the different schools of group psychotherapy. Supervision of both group and individual psychotherapy is a major part of the training. Large group meetings are regularly held to explore the dynamics of the training organization, the 'training community'.

How would an academic programme compare with this? Firstly, an academic programme would not have to teach clinical skills and to be responsible for therapist competence. The principal concern would

be with meeting the requirements of academic institutions, therefore written work and examinations would feature. Depth of theory would be much greater. The model of correspondence theory applies here, and so the relevant related fields would include: social psychology; neuroscience, economics; sociology; the philosophy of science; and, history. The history of psychology shows how concepts of what it is to be a person, an individual, constantly alter with economic, religious and environmental influences. This is studied through the different concepts of Self and of identity that we find in different historical periods and cultures (Siegel, 2005). The contributions of Norbert Elias and the school of 'figural sociology' is important here (van Krieken, 1985), as also is the French school of social representations. We would study the major models of group psychotherapy — American, British, French, German, Italian — as to their origins, interconnectedness and compatibilities.

Group psychology is a study of connectedness, inter-connectedness, of the transpersonal and the personal (Pines, 2003). The concept of 'group-ality' is central to mankind as a group animal who, according to Bion, is at war with himself over his group-ality; by contrast, Foulkes sees mankind finding full development through society. This is a central question of establishing the group approach as an academic field of study: what are the origins of the human family and of social order. There is much new knowledge from the developing fields of socio-biology and of modern genetics. We can give new depth to understanding Freud's words that the human being has no reason not to recognize his continuity with the animal world. Primate research, summarized by de Waal (1996) and Ridley (1996), convincingly shows how primate groups have complex social organizations; that rank, hierarchy, nurturance, sympathy and empathy, negotiation and conflict solution can be found in primate groups. Our genetic structure is very close to that of our primate cousins though we differ so significantly in our learning capacity and by being able to transmit learning through the generations, having developed 'external symbolic memories', to use the phrase coined by Merlin Donald in his important monograph *Origins of the Modern Mind* (Donald, 1991). The adaptive capacities and limits of the human psyche as laid down genetically and neurobiologically has been set out clearly in the important book *The Adaptive Design of the Human Psyche* (Slavin and Kriegman, 1992).

To understand sociality, we follow a distinct path to the mainstream of psychological and psychoanalytic theory — connectedness rather than separateness; in psychology, Vigotsky and Bakhtin versus Piaget, the 'we' and 'us', the 'nos', as well as the 'me', the 'I', the ego. There is a wealth of new information on early infant connectedness and attachment (Hobson, 2002), the concept of the horizontal depth of the 'in-between', not only the vertical depth of the psychoanalytic psyche (Brothers, 1997). We are beginning to understand more of the significant psychic differences that arise from participation in median and large groups, pioneered by Patrick de Maré. There are philosophies, which base themselves on the inseparable interconnectedness of the human being, i.e. Martin Buber on the encounter; Emanuel Levinas on the face-to-face; and the British philosopher John MacMurray who, in his book *Reason and Emotion* (1935), wrote:

"Personality is essentially mutual. There can be no such thing as an isolated person. It is only in the relation between itself and another person that the self can exist This difference between 'I' and 'You' is of the very essence of personality". (MacMurray, 1935: 222)

and —

"The unit of personal existence is not the individual, but two persons in personal relation; and that we are persons not by individual right, but in virtue of our relation to one another. The personal is constituted by personal relatedness. The unit of the personal is not the 'I' but the 'You and I'." (MacMurray, quoted in McIntosh, 2004: 74)

I shall develop the philosophical and psychological concern with the fundamental interconnectedness of human beings, our intersubjectivity. To grasp this fully is difficult: it runs counter to our Western concern and pride in the individuated Self. When Descartes declared that he could doubt everything other than his own cognition, he separated the mind and the emotions, the brain and the body. He presumed the fact that his own existence was prior to, independent and separate from the world of others. Though this liberated the human man to think independent thoughts, led to the secularization of the Western man and opened our culture to science, we have to reclaim interconnectedness, our being-with others, reconnect individual psychology, social psychology and sociology. This is our aim in group analysis.

The Spanish philosopher Ortega, in *Man and People* (Ortega, 1957), writes that willy-nilly, we are all altruists — that is, we are constituted to be open to the other, the 'alter'; that before each one of us became aware of him/herself, he/she already had the basic experience of others who were not 'I'. Ortega quotes from Husserl, 'The meaning of the term "man" implies a reciprocal existence of one to the other: hence a community of men "a society"'. Ortega points out to us, using the physical act of pointing to an object. how the 'objective world', the world of external objects, comes into being through sociality. If I point to an object and the other recognizes my gesture, responds to it and brings the object to me, then we infer that there is, out there, a world of shared actions and meanings, that there is one who understands and reciprocates my gesture. The world of others, of alters, of I and you, differentiates out from a world of 'we-ity'. Our language stands in the way of describing this world of 'co-living', the world of likeness, fellowship — a word that Foulkes frequently used. It seems that Ortega's own language, Spanish, has a fuller vocabulary than English or French (I cannot speak for Italian and Greek): we-us, nous, nos, are inclusive terms; in Spanish, the word 'nos-otros' means a community of you and I that excludes others, the 'they'.

Finding another like me, leads to finding the not-like-me, a they, them.

Exploring understanding, reciprocity, would lead us to the current interest in the 'theory of man' and metallization which is how human beings recognize mental states in one's own Self and those of others. We detect the absence of this understanding in autism (Hobson, 2002). Developmental psychology points to the crucial importance of the early mother-child interactions in developing the human man. Communicative games, turn-taking, handling objects together, vocalizations, mirroring, echoing, being similar to, but with a slight difference, these activities engage and alert the infant's man to the discovery of Self through agency and responsibility.

We must also enquire into the biological readiness of human infants to these events:

"...how have we humans evolved from hominids with their limited mental capacities to our enormous brain power, our capacity for learning and for transmitting learning through culture. How have we formed societies that have enhanced the potential of their members in contrast to primate society, where position in the hierarchy is the overriding factor in social life, where dominance is murderously fought over." (Zamagni, 2004)

Notwithstanding that human societies can display the same murderous competitiveness, the significant avoidances of dangers that have been suggested are restraint, learning from authority with its capacity to take instructions, a sense of right and wrong, of morality that develops from the human brains capacity for abstraction.

I have not touched on the area of group dynamics, large group dynamics, the study of organizations and communities, but all these would need to be included in an adequate academic study of group analysts.

Conclusion

I hope that I have shown that there is an ample field for the development of group analysis as an academic discipline.

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Ave atque vale³

Malcolm Pines

I have had the privilege and the pleasure to edit our journal for 16 years, following the path laid out by Dr Foulkes, Pat de Maré and Harold Behr. During these years, the scope of our journal has widened: our 'Special Issues', edited by guest editors, have taken us into new fields — trauma, contemporary psychology and sociology, 'relational goods', eating disorders, and the concept of time, to name but a few. We have encouraged empirical research results, so important for our scientific standing and for confirmation of our belief in group analysis as an effective clinical method.

Our journal is truly international. Outside the UK, we have had valuable papers from Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Eire, Slovenia, Serbia, Switzerland, Israel, Australia, Turkey, Holland, Belgium and the former Soviet Union. We welcome the papers we are beginning to receive from North and South America and Mexico.

I have encouraged dialogue, asking for comments on papers and for the authors to respond to them. Lively debate encouraged!

I leave the Editor's chair at a time when publishing is changing, e.g. electronically-published journals — already established in Italy by Claudio Neri — with electronic access to all our back numbers and access to other SAGE journals. New skills are needed.

Our relations with our publishers SAGE have always been cordial; they have given us encouragement, excellent service and publicity. I give my warm thanks to all the staff who have engaged with us over the years.

The editorial work has been happily lightened — and enlightened — first by Sheila Taylor who became known to so many authors and subscribers of the journal for her expertise and standards of perfection, and who established a most professional production and editing schedule, then in 1997 by Maureen Spurgeon, our current assistant editor who is a journalist and sub-editor of great professionalism. Her knowledge of Italian, French and other languages has helped to rephrase papers written by authors whose first language is not English. She is able to 'slim down' papers to more or less fit into our Procrustean level of circa 5000 words, tactfully handling those authors who naturally cherish all their words. Thank you, Maureen.

So, I bid farewell to our referees, whose opinions have helped many authors to improve their papers; to the Editorial Committee whose wisdom has balanced my idiosyncrasies; to the Management Committee of the Group-Analytic Society (London) who have given me editorial freedom and swallowed the considerable financial loss generated.

In so many countries, I have been warmly welcomed as an ambassador for Group Analysis.

I wish for my successor as much enjoyment as I have experienced and hand over the torch of Group Analysis, confident that it will continue to be the forum where we can meet, discuss, agree and disagree in the very special freedom for association that was the creation of our founder, Michael Foulkes.

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