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*READING S. H. FOULKES  
IN THE HOPE OF UNDERSTANDING  
OURSELVES\**

BY

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It has always surprised and intrigued me as to why the work and thought of S. H. Foulkes — the founder of Group Analysis— is so little known and so misunderstood by Spanish-speaking group authors. I always supposed that the barrier went beyond a simple idiomatic limitation. After all, the work of Bion, originally also published in English, is the one which has most influenced the pioneers of the Argentine Group School. Lately I have had the

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chance to check this out.

As co-authors of a book on group psychotherapy<sup>†</sup> we discussed a few days ago in Madrid this question. It led us to analyse the occult ideological power struggles and institutional repression which caused that the development of group analysis had to take place outside of organized psychoanalysis. A commentary of Hernán Kesselman, which I quote by heart, has encouraged me to write the present note. Hernán said: "Reading what you wrote, I was sorry not to have known Foulkes. I asked myself why they had deprived me of him in the Psychoanalytic Association and in the Argentine Group Association; they introduced him next to Bion and next to a lot of other things. What Campos said makes clear to me that Foulkes was more than what those books were saying..."

The books Hernán referred to were more than likely Psychoanalytic Group Psychotherapy, by S. H. Foulkes and E. J. Anthony, published by Paidós in 1964, translation of the English original of Penguin's first edition titled: Group Psychotherapy. The Psycho-Analytic Approach, published in London in 1957, and the first edition of Paidós' edition of Group Psicoterapia by L. Grinberg, M. Langer and E. Rodrigué, also of 1957. Upon return home I came across a paragraph from other Argentine authors which began to alarm me. It was Themes of Group Psicoterapia by Marcos Bernard and André Cuissard (Helguero, 1979 ) where it says textually: "I will expose now the concepts of the group therapists: Foulkes, Ezriel and Bion trained in the Kleinian school and were the first to apply these methods". Let us be serious, gentlemen! If Foulkes or Bion heard this, they would furiously turn in their grave, and as for Ezriel, his tantrum would probably take him there. This is the way history is written, and written it is... written it stays!

To include Foulkes with the group dynamicists of Kurt Lewin is an error of historic perspective due to special editorial circumstances that Foulkes corrected in successive editions of the book from 1965 onwards and which, in consequence, excuses that Grinberg, Langer and Rodrigué make the exposition they make since they did not have access to the revised text. But, calling S. H. Foulkes a Kleinian, at the heights of 1979, besides being very little serious, for me, as psychoanalyst and group analyst, has the value of symptom and represents an emergent whose source of repression is worth elucidating. I will dedicate the rest of this paper to it, but first let's know facts.

S. H. Foulkes was a convinced Freudian German psychoanalyst, concretely from the Frankfurt group, trained in Vienna at the end of the 30s. Analytically Freud's grandson because of his analysis with Helene Deutsch, he stayed faithful to the Professor and his English analytical family to the end of his days. He immigrated to England for ethnic reasons and obvious politics since beyond being a psychoanalyst and a Jew; he always was a convinced democrat. During the years of the feud between Mrs. Klein and Miss Ana Freud he did not take sides, the men were in the war. His leanings, however, were more towards the latter, who he had helped as a teacher during the first years of the Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic.

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<sup>†</sup> Pacho O'Donnell ed. (1980) *Psicología Dinámica Grupal*, Madrid: Fundamentos, pp. 11-44.

The open fight for being the European capital of Psychoanalysis, into which London had been converted after the war, lasted 18 months beginning in 1943, and caught S. H. Foulkes at the Military Hospital of Northfield— where he was incorporated from March 1943 to January 1946. When he returned, the “Battle of the Channel” of the German immigrants had ended, and the brilliant truce the English arrived at in trying to resolve an internal theoretic war without splits had been achieved. S. H. Foulkes incorporated himself to the B group — the Freudians— of the British Psychoanalytical Society of which he was a member and of whose Institute he was a didactic analyst until that day in June 1976 when he suddenly, without any suffering, he stopped to exist during a group session he was conducting. Therefore it is clear that he never had anything to do with the A group —the Kleinians— which in psychoanalysis is known as the English School.

Wanting to be more specific, his contacts with Bion and the other group therapists of the Tavistock Clinic were rather few. His institutional research and teaching in group therapy developed first during the War in Northfield, later at the Maudsley Hospital of London and after that in the Group Analytic Society and Institute founded by him. Foulkes' influence in the Tavistock has been rather through residents and people who trained with him at the Maudsley Hospital., such as, for example, its present director, R. Gosling —founding member of GAS— and consultants of the actual Group Programme, Lionel Kreeger and Malcolm Pines —founding members of IGA. From the other side of the Atlantic, and sometimes perhaps only of the Channel, the fact that the English School is thought as equivalent to the Tavistock, at least as far as groups are concerned, is far from being the truth. Kleinian influence at the Tavistock has been enormous but more through its Institute of Human Relations, dedicated to social applications of psychoanalysis, than through the Clinic. The latter, all things considered, very English, has been quite open in its ways. If S. H. Foulkes had become its director, as was proposed at some point, perhaps it would have been more Freudian but equally open.

Bion's work in groups, unfortunately, was short-lived. After his analysis with Melanie Klein he lost interest in it and he never again conducted a group. It is a real pity, since if he had kept to it, perhaps he would have accomplished the project he told us about in his introduction to *Experiences in Groups*, where he says: "I am sorry not to have discussed sovereignty and power. In small groups like those used here, sovereignty and power do not develop to maturity. Their mature form is extrinsic and impinges on the group only in the form of invasion by another group. These matters I shall discuss in a further volume, if I have time, and I shall then take up the extra-economic sources of the value of money, which are not only important in themselves but also contribute significantly through their influence on economics to the dynamics of sovereignty and power." Bion knew what he talked about through his own personal experience. The Northfield experiment had cost him his job at the Hospital and also the one of the Commander in Chief who had allowed it.

We will now try to translate the symptom based on a series of Freudian slips and, naturally, like all symptoms, it is over-determined. When the Penguin book was published —a paper

back of great diffusion and low price, three shillings and sixpence, less than twenty cents of a pound sterling then— there was a big hurry. The two authors had almost no time to compare the chapters they had written, before the book went into print. Anthony, of the two the more agile pen, took it upon himself to write a “Panoramic Introduction” that really was not doing much justice to the development of Foulkes’ thinking. The emphasis he put on the topologic psychology of K. Lewin was unnecessary and makes room for a serious misunderstanding. In the Spanish translation it says as follows: “The group-analytic approach shares with other approaches in group-analysis the psycho-analytic background; but it is nearer, on the other hand, to the ‘field’ and “*Gestalt*” schools. It has been stimulated in turn by the sociometric work of J. L. Moreno, the sociological views of Karl Mannheim, Norbert Elias, and others, and the psychological views of Kurt Lewin.” There is nothing more false. How can one explain that Anthony committed such a gross error and Foulkes let it pass? For me, the only possible explanation is the one of acting out of the therapeutic couple in transference. Anthony analysed himself individually in his didactic training with S. H. Foulkes and later also with him in a group. Both were members of the British Society of Psychoanalysis, but, for me, the transference had more of a group character and in relation to this Association, than one due to unresolved aspects of the psychoanalytic relationship. Later I shall explain why. The fact is that from the second edition of the book onwards, in 1965, this “Panoramic introduction” disappears and the error never disturbed the relation of friendship and collaboration between them.

The distorted base of this opinion lies in the fact that, during his training in Frankfurt, Foulkes had been in contact with Gestalt psychologists, as also had been Kurt Lewin. That one in his theoretic formulations of the observation of group dynamics arrives at Field Theory and the other at Group Analysis is only natural. For Foulkes group dynamics is the place where psychology and sociology meet, the same than the relation between individual and group is one of figure and ground, depending from where one looks at it. This is why for him it was never a problem if interpretations were directed to the group or to the individual, if they had an historic character or if they were based on the here and now, or if the therapist made them, or some other member or the whole group made them. Foulkes' group psychotherapy is not psychoanalysis in a group nor of the group, but groupanalytic, the one carried out by a group in which the therapist is included as one more member. The collaboration with the sociologists of the Frankfurt School, however, definitely was a close one. It is not without importance that the Psychoanalytic Institute and the Frankfurt School of Sociology shared the same roof in the same building and organized activities jointly. One should not forget that the Frankfurt School, Jewish and leftwing, was as much persecuted by Nazism as were Jewish psychoanalysts. The development of the ideas within a culture follow cycles, they are in the air, in the network of interpersonal relations and of communication and they are located at the nodal point of the one who expresses them. Trying to give Lewin priority over the ideas about the field —group situation and group context of Foulkes— would be like trying to dispute Bertalanffy the priority of General Systems Theory or Lacan the mirror stadium, since both concepts are implicit in Foulkes thought long before they were formulated. What is important is not so much what makes a scientific discovery possible but what impedes it, and what impedes it in general are those who dominate the community of scientists, the scientific professional system, where this discovery is natural and possible.

In order to close, I shall now examine the other angle of the symptom, its social and institutional dimension. The social unconscious is that what is not said in the group, maybe that which all know and together they keep quiet about. In my opinion group development is something natural in analysis; the same when one arrives at group analysis one continues onto the network analysis of social organizations —the family or the professional group— in our case large group. Foulkes, with a lot of ability and still more internal contradiction, had to formulate group analysis —a method of investigation, a therapeutic theory and technique based on the small group—avoiding the conflict that apparently and underneath existed with Psychoanalysis. He achieved it and he paid his price. In part, the obscure quality of some of his writings, I believe, obeys this reason. But what is more important is that the book of theory which was to follow his last work, *Group- Analytic Psychotherapy. Method and Principles*, he never finished, even when there exists the whole plan of the book and abundant manuscripts that would permit to reconstruct it posthumously, although with a lot of effort. The fact that in England group analysis had to develop outside the Psychoanalytic Institute is no surprise. After all, Jones' power came through Melanie Klein and somehow it was a way of rebelling against the shadow of the master, and the Viennese and Berlin Empire. But that this happens in Argentina, frankly cannot be understood.

Pichon-Rivi re, the father of Social Psychology and of the majority of the Argentine group analysts, was founding member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association (1942), and the IADES in 1953. The group society AAPPG, of 1955, unites all Argentine group workers who, incidentally, were almost all members or candidates of the APA. Group analysis and psychodrama prospered within institutions, but outside the orthodox Society and Institute. For some reason, the Argentine School of Psychoanalysis stuck to the English School and, naturally, Bion, who by then no longer worked with groups, even though he retrospectively reaped fruit from the already published in 1959, his *Experiences in Groups*, was converted into Argentine group therapists' Bible. This led to that the path followed went from psychoanalysis in the group to psychoanalysis of the group, but somehow never arrived at group analysis which already was implicit in Pichon-Rivi re's ECRO. On the other hand, just like the French, the Argentine showed more interest in psychodrama than in the analytical possibilities of stranger groups where the atmosphere and the conditions are created so that an efficient and radical cure of the may take place. If group analysis in Argentina has not followed other paths than the ones most feasible, and even today continues as a second-class therapy, I suppose it is due to that at some point the order "no more groups" since in London it was not considered serious. The enormous creative capacity of the Argentine psychoanalysts perhaps would have made it unnecessary for Balint to burst out with the following lament:

"Even though Freud had proposed a certain alloy of the pure gold of psychoanalysis in order to accommodate it to the psychotherapy of the masses, and in spite of the fact that almost all pioneers in group psychotherapy were trained psychoanalysts, we as a corporation have refused to accept responsibility for its further development —in my opinion in detriment of all implicated— and specially of our own science. There are others who are collecting a rich harvest in this important field and we, perhaps, lost irretrievably the opportunity of making firsthand clinical observations in the psychodynamics of communities". And Balint there

adds this comment: “It could be an intriguing historic —and psychological— study about what it is that lead psychoanalytic opinion to an opposite attitude (to the one of infantile psychoanalysis) in the case of group psychotherapy“. My reading of the social unconscious concealed under Foulkes' and Anthony's negligence and under the “Kleinian” Foulkes aims at problems of sovereignty and power of the psychoanalytic institution of the system over the group of group analysts and which certainly are related to extra-economic aspects — ideological— of the capitalist structure in which we move. I believe that a historic and psychological study on these lines would be very useful for the psychoanalytic community in other countries. If the Argentine group pioneers dared to undertake this task, along with the crowds that followed, all of them, therapists and patients of analysis the world over, would be grateful to them. In any case, since Bion's influence has been so important between these colleagues, I will permit myself to remind them that methodologically they should remember a warning he made:

“When a group complains about the incapacity of remembering what happened in a previous situation, it goes to transcribe meetings. This record converts itself into a ‘Bible’ to which one refers at all times ... The group recurs to ‘making Bibles’ when it feels threatened by an idea whose acceptance would imply a development in the individuals that compose the group. These ideas have emotional force and excite emotional opposition for their association with characteristics appropriate to the leader of the pairing group. When the dependence group or the fight-flight group are active, there appears a struggle to suppress the new idea since it is felt that the emergence of this new idea threatens the status quo.” To make bibles is more difficult to do with Foulkes than with Bion or as the Lacanians try to do with Freud. After all, perhaps it has not been all that bad that S. H. Foulkes has taken with him to the tomb his book of theory.

I will finish with a very personal anecdote that allowed me to read a message Foulkes had left written for me with his ashes. Just after his death, a rainy autumn morning in, I went to the Golder 's Green Crematory. This is the Jewish crematory and is on a rise that leads to the house in Linnell Close where S. H. Foulkes lived— Michael as his friends called him. I remembered that on one of my visits, already elderly he walked up the slope with me. He commented that there rested Sigmund Freud's ashes and I promised myself that some day I would go and pay him my respects. Years passed by and I had not kept my promise. This time my wife, Hanne, who then lived with Elisabeth under the same roof where I had so often visited Michael, accompanied me. I said to myself, let's go first to see the Greek urn where Freud's ashes were kept. We found it after making a lot of turns. There it was, on top of a pedestal, in a niche right in the centre of the principal redbrick building. Behind, a stain glass window from where, filtered, entered the winter light and through which one could make out the green gold of the lawn that surrounds the building. There, surrounded by the vessels where are kept the ashes of the members who made up his family, is Freud. Impressive!

We went out, bordering the lawn where the ashes were spread of those Jews who wanted to be closer to the earth. We reached almost the bottom and next to the path which borders the lawn there was planted a little tree. There, fertilizing the roots is what is left of Michael and the one who was his first wife and mother of his three children. Natural, simple! We stood there a long while and before him we thought in silence. I turned around and I tried to see from there the window where the urn of Freud is. First Michael, and now Hanne and I knew where he is. Freud never could know where Michael was heading for. This seems to be the



destiny of the psychoanalysis with the group. While it continues confined in the past of Greek tragedy, does not merge with the people and the blood of its kind, and fertilizes the roots of the tree of life, it will continue to be a conservative and elitist therapy. Instead, if it does so, the tree will grow high and strong, and will have leaves, and give fruit and shade. The birds will rest in its branches and will sing with joy. And come summer children will play in its shade, the young will make love and the old will think...

This is how analysis grows; when the analysis of one is carried out by all; this is what it means to be group.

When reading this text written 25 years ago with the objective of putting it into the BSCW, the first thing I remember is the farewell of the [SUDACAS & Co.](#) also known as psicoargonautas, in the airport of the Prat, Barcelona, last time they came to visit us Will we meet again? In the meanwhile we read each other and we read Foulkes and this time in Castilian so that there will not be any misunderstanding.