

## **The importance of S. H. Foulkes in the development of group analysis and group psychotherapy in Portugal**

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S. H. Foulkes and the evolution of group analysis – S. H. Foulkes was one of the personalities who made the greatest contribution to the development of group psychotherapy, which during the 40s and 50s was inspired above all by psychoanalysis, and who ultimately conceived group analysis.

Of German origin and trained in Freudian psychoanalysis, a psychiatric doctor by profession, in the 1930s he saw the importance of group psychotherapy as a form of interaction between individuals, as he told his wife Kilmeny, and later described in a paper subsequently published how he got the people who were in the waiting room of his practice to communicate with each other, with the aim of promoting mechanisms of inter and intra-personal relationship.

Later on he organized group psychotherapy as a form of treatment, particularly after his experience (done alternatively with Bion) at Northfield, which was established during World War II to treat patients traumatized by the war. Northfield was also the source of a form of community intervention which he also pioneered, along with Bion, Main and, later on, Maxwell Jones, who was influenced in a lesser degree by the psychoanalytical elements that had initially influenced these therapies.

It was moreover on the basis of the experience he acquired at this time, his own psychoanalytic training and the powerful influence of Ruesh and Bateson's work, published in 1952: "Communication: the social matrix of psychiatry", that he defined group analysis as a group psychotherapy, defined in terms of structure, process and content - the very concepts the notion of group matrix was focused on - from the perspective of those authors, and to which Foulkes returns in establishing that concept, one of the few that he was to formulate in developing his thinking on group analysis.

It was moreover this entity, defined in these very terms, that Foulkes considered to be the drive of group-analytic therapy, through the development of transference situations in connection

with others, of simple communication and support, the therapist's role being limited, although fundamental because of its own position, as Foulkes himself showed by being the facilitator of the development of these different types of interaction.

Working from these principles, Foulkes distinguished group analysis from other group psychotherapies inspired by analysis, such as the ideas of Wolf, Schwartz (psychoanalysis in groups), those of Bion, defined in his book "Experience in groups" and those connected with Ego psychology, psychology of the Self, ORT and other psychoanalytical perspectives.

Although the bases of these conceptualizations have remained broadly unchanged, we must point out that his opinions did alter somewhat over the course of his life. Thus in 1957 he considered that group analysis was essentially different from psychoanalysis and that, although the transference situation was fundamental within it, it would never take the form of a group transference neurosis; much less would it be susceptible to being worked through.

In 1964, Foulkes revised his position, believing that the group transference neurosis could not only be organized in the group analysis situation, it could also be worked through, facts that necessarily brought it closed to psychoanalysis. But in 1975, a year before his death, in a work that was the last he wrote and that may be regarded as his scientific testament, "group analytic psychotherapy: Methods and principles", Foulkes once again underlined that he considered group psychoanalysis and group analysis essentially different techniques and that formation and subsequent working through of the group transference neurosis was unnecessary and would prolong treatment unnecessarily. On the contrary, he recommended that it concentrate on what he referred to as ego training in action, which he defined as an analysis of the interaction of the different entities making up the psyche of the individuals in the group and which are their ego, id and superego.

All in all, we may however emphasize that, apart from a few fluctuations, particularly between 1960 and 1972, and without entering into a discussion of the concept of transference neurosis and its psychotic, perverse, characterial and borderline equivalents (M. Klein, Rosenfeld, Etchgoyen, Käes, Kernberg), Foulkes shows himself a supporter of an understanding in which he separates psychoanalysis, which primarily has a vertical dimension and is centered on working through the transference neurosis, from group analysis, conceived more as a psychotherapy – which has eminently horizontal dimension - even though he admits, contrary

to Freud's position at the Budapest conference in 1918, that the former may ultimately be even more effective than the latter that he centers, as we have seen on ego training in action.

But in defining it as a situation in which an interaction is seen between the different entities that make up the psyche of the individual in the group context, he adds to the horizontal dimension of the group analysis process a vertical dimension that takes it closer to the psychoanalytical context, an inclination that appears moreover to be present in the ideas of K. Lewin, whom he so frequently quotes.

At any rate, Foulkes had the idea, right from the start, of spreading the new technique that he had discovered. To this end he trained mental health workers who were accustomed to using it, after a prior training, which he initially thought of more as a sensitization. In this way he prepared several of them, above all doctors and psychologists, to take it forward, first in the United Kingdom and then here and there throughout Europe. It was in this way that he came to know E. L. Cortesão.

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S H. Foulkes, E. L. Cortesão and the spread of group analysis in Portugal – Fascinated by psychoanalytic techniques, always interested in problems of interaction between individuals and group phenomena, Cortesão, who at that stage still had no psychoanalytic experience, immediately showed a desire to be trained in this technique and sensed its potential usefulness in Portugal, which was at the time a country untouched by the use of psychoanalytic techniques, from the practical point of view at least, as only theoretical approaches to these ideas had been analyzed and developed there.

After a year of training, Cortesão returned to Portugal with the aim of developing and spreading the new therapy, the use of which he had learnt and become familiar with in London. His strong personality and his intellectual abilities were a powerful aid in spreading the therapy and in organizing and developing the Portuguese Group Analytic Society, which he transformed into one of the most important in Europe, after its English counterpart. But he was also certainly at the origin of the search for a new conceptualization on which it might be based.

His subsequent training in psychoanalysis and the fact that he came to consider this therapy as the most perfect that could be carried out in psychiatry, perhaps the gold of which Freud spoke at the Budapest conference of 1918, led him to seek to conceive group analysis as another form

of psychoanalysis, perhaps the most complete and perfect that could be carried out (psychoanalysis and group analysis are the same therapy, albeit with different working methods). In this way he sought to integrate various perspectives of psychoanalysis in the group analytical approach: Freudian metapsychology, the ideas of ego psychology, ORT - above all according to the outlook of the English group (Balint, Fairbairn, Guntrip and Winnicott), but not setting aside other contributions such as those of Maurice Bouvet and, more markedly, Otto Kernberg and, lastly, psychology of the self. Cortesão was in the habit of saying that the adaptive and psychosocial aspects of ego psychology constituted the meeting point of metapsychological ideas and those of ORT and that this fact could be seen clearly only in the group-analytic situation.

Group analysis appeared to him as identical to psychoanalysis, but supplemented by study and analysis of the group dimension. For Cortesão, the aim of group analysis is working-through of the group transference neurosis and individualization of the selves. If the second of these dimensions appears to be proper to all group situations and always follows on from any process of socialization, the first appears as specific to all structurally psychoanalytic situations, and is the same as what occurs in that particular situation.

In this respect he clearly moved away from Foulkes, asserting that psychoanalysis and group analysis were based on the same principles and even that they constituted a similar therapy, as we have seen.

But Cortesão is not impervious to the idea of the difficulty of working-through within the group analysis matrix and in the manner of achieving it. For this reason he conceives of the matrix as a network of relationship, communication and working-through and considers that it is the group analyst, through his pattern, which he defines as a set of attitudes that he sustains and maintains within it with an interpretative function and that permits development of the group analytic process within the theoretical and technical dimensions proper to it that we defined above (working through of the group transference neurosis and individualization of the selves), who is the very drive of the process. It is true that Foulkes had talked about the importance of the special position of the group analyst, but he never took that thinking so far as to create a concept even remotely close to the pattern, which in fact he always rejected peremptorily and which now appeared, as we have seen, to be the true origin of the process, in place of the matrix, as he had always held.

In point of fact, according to Cortesão, through the pattern, the therapist molded his attitude, marked by the rules of neutrality, abstinence and interpretation in the group analysis matrix, which came to function in harmony with him, while he transmitted his own functioning to the matrix, which generally mediated his action on the other members of the group. In this way the group matrix leads to the sharing and expression of their sentiments by the various group members. Thus all this action will be determined by the action of the group matrix itself, strongly influenced by the model that thus becomes the decisive element in the therapeutic process.

In an intermediate conception, ultimately closer to Foulkes than to Cortesão, M. R. Leal asserted that ego training in action was the axis of the group analytic treatment process, but emphasized that regressive mechanisms that occurred within this therapy could reach protoverbal levels. The therapist continued to be a fundamental figure in the process. But the central figure of the process comes to reside in the internal relational matrix (which Foulkes preferred to refer to as the social matrix of the group), an entity that is formed throughout the whole of the individual's life, as he passes through the different forms of group, from the mother-child dyad, through the oedipal and extended family, to the different school groups, from pre-primary to university, as well as work and leisure groups, which is particularly suitable for modification by the group analytic matrix. Without entering into a discussion of whether the internal relational matrix is an autonomous or acquired structure (primary or secondary), in accordance with Hartmann's understanding and as I myself have argued, or a mere circumstance of the individual, as Cortesão asserted, I will limit myself to saying that, in accordance with its author's definition (and as she admits she was strongly influenced by the ideas of behaviorists such as Watson and Lorenz and ethologists like Bowlby), she conceived of these entities as part of the self that acquired and developed an interactive capacity. We must emphasize here that, although M. R. Leal always maintained a psychoanalytic perspective in her approach, she gradually developed an attitude of research, based on observation and experimentation and avoiding dogmatic concepts or preconceived attitudes, increasingly assuming an integrative attitude that brings her closer to the ideas of Yalom.

In group analysis all communication is relevant: that which is expressed globally and completely, and that which is only intended (but not carried out), that which is latent and

unconscious as well as that which is manifest and conscious, the verbal and the non-verbal and all responses and reactions to such communication.

But all these interactions have to take place and be evaluated within the group matrix, even if, at times, they are more particularly related to one or other of its members and their respective internal relational matrices. In this way a figure-background interaction is established between the former and the latter, the whole of this situation being mediated by the catalyzing and fomenting action of the pattern – or equivalent figure (but always connected with the position of leader or analyst).

Thus according to the ideas of the Portuguese school, the concepts of pattern, matrix and internal relational matrix appear as the fundamental axes of group analytical theory (the representative concepts of a metatheory) regardless of the dimensions and relevance they may have.

But whatever the differences between the theorizations that we present, the fact is that their basic ideas are taken from Foulkes and the differences (apart from the concept of model) are not as great as they might appear to be at first sight.

Therefore despite the relative similarities the major difference between the conceptualizations of the English and Portuguese schools is the establishment of the concept of the pattern, which the group analyst moulds in the group matrix and the status of the pattern as the drive of the group analytical process vis-à-vis the matrix. But it is through the matrix that it carries out this action and thus Foulkes's initial notion of the group-analytic therapeutic process stands. At any rate, according to the Portuguese school the focal drive of the process is the group analyst, through his model. Here again M. R. Leal has an intermediate position. For her the action of the pattern is secondary, although it propitiates a general attitude of the matrix, as, in her view, the tonic basis of the group-analytic treatment process lies in an action of the matrix on the internal relational matrix.

The 1st European Group Analysis Symposium – It was in this general context and at a time when the outlines of the theoretical separation between the British and Portuguese societies were beginning to be sketched but was still far from being clear-cut, that we went to visit Foulkes at his home in Linell Close, during a Congress of Social Psychiatry that took place in London in 1969. It was there that we had the honor and the pleasure of suggesting, along with

Nuno Ribeiro, that a European Group Analysis Symposium be held in Lisbon, to which we would very much like to invite whomever he chose. We felt that we had touched on an intimate desire of his, such was the ease with which Foulkes agreed to our proposal. It coincided moreover with the policy that, as we have seen, he always followed, of spreading group analysis in Europe, with the goal of making it the continent's most widespread analysis-inspired group psychotherapy. The time had come to hold an event that would make this desire come true and give rise to the first meeting of European group analysts.

Next we sought to obtain Cortesão's support for the idea of the Symposium, as he was sometimes opposed to international initiatives, despite the fact that his name was already well known and he enjoyed great prestige in international circles. But it was not difficult to win him over. He understood that it was essential to hold the symposium in Lisbon and that this would give our Society an important position in the context of group analysis societies and Europe. However, our society's subsequent move away from the others had negative repercussions for its position in the European context and offset a large part of the results achieved. Not until 1992, under my presidency and after a congress in homage to Cortesão, to which several foreign colleagues were invited, did it begin to regain the position that it had in the meantime lost.

Nevertheless, at the time the result was a success. Nuno Ribeiro and I took upon ourselves the task of organizing it and managed, despite our lack of experience, to set up this event, which was a major success and had particularly fruitful consequences. It is clear that we had the support of Foulkes, who told us whom we should invite, those whom he considered the most important and most highly thought of at the time. Thus the symposium counted Portuguese and English group analysts among its participants, along with a significant group of French psychotherapists, psychodramatists for the most part, connected with Anne Ancelin Schutzenberger, as well as Spanish, Italian and German group analysts and group psychotherapists analytically oriented other nationalities, suggested by Foulkes and whom everything indicates he considered to be the cream of European group analysts.

This symposium was the first in a long series of eighteen which were held on a biannual basis thereafter. The 2nd Symposium was held, naturally enough, in London, as our English colleagues already thought that they should have hosted the first and it was only because of our

proposal of 1969 that it came to take place in Lisbon, as the need for it was already widely felt, as we have seen.

These symposia have permitted dissemination of the notions of group analysis, as formulated by Foulkes, particularly in his last book; the latest, such as his structuring centred on small and large groups, ultimately served to unify group-analytic practice in several countries. The subsequent organization and action of the E.G.A.T.I.N. also contributed to this.

Thus, as Foulkes, and after him his followers in the British Group Analytic Society, had always wanted, group analysis clearly became the group psychotherapy of analytic inspiration most widespread in Europe and one of the best-known in the world.

Above and beyond Foulkes's personal contribution, which we mentioned right at the outset, we cannot fail to note the importance of the work of the whole of the British Group Analytic Society, or the Group Analytic Society (London) as it is known, and in particular Malcolm Pines and other colleagues in spreading this group psychotherapy.

Colleagues of other nationalities, such as Juan Campos, Fabrizio Napolitani, Karl König, Lisa Rafaelsen, Werner Knauss, Gerda Winther and many others have also helped in these endeavors, which can in no way be seen today as exclusively British. Thus, in the work I did to organize the 1st Congress, and taking into account the evolution that has subsequently taken place, I cannot but feel flattered by the reflection that at a certain point I was a tiny atom who helped in the building of a mighty edifice.

Furthermore, the British Group Analytic Society has gone on to assume its international vocation, initially accepting members of other nationalities, then at a later stage electing them as members of its governing bodies, its last three presidents having been renowned international figures of non-British origin. The British Group Analytic Society is thus transforming itself into a true European federation.

Other repercussions in Portugal of Foulkes' work – But Foulkes was not known to us solely for his works on group analysis. The Northfield experiment, on which he had worked, and his subsequent activities at Mandsley Hospital, as well as several papers published by him, had shown us his role in the experience of the therapeutic communities, at the time widespread and strongly influenced by psychoanalytical ideas, despite the apparent distance of one of their most eminent authors, Maxwell Jones, from these last ideas. But authors other than Foulkes,

such as Main, Bion (who had also worked on the Northfield experiment) fitted entirely within this conceptualization.

It then struck us, young psychiatrists at the time, that it was important to use in hospital practice the techniques that we had learnt and were using in private practice. Criticisms of the Psychiatric Hospitals, which at the time were beginning to spread, and the need to adopt new practices which might replace those used hitherto, were developing in our minds.

In truth, anti-psychotic treatments were limited at the time. While insulin coma therapy and convulsive therapies, with the exception of electric convulsive therapy, were already on the way out, only then did the use of the new psychopharmacological therapies begin, with the still recent discovery of neuroleptics and antidepressants.

Psychosocial techniques and techniques inspired by psychoanalysis were seen as something that might replace the former, without the need to use the latter, which were still rudimentary in terms of the results obtained and the side effects of which were often overstated.

For this reason, knowledge of the scale and results of the therapeutic communities and the fact that we knew that Foulkes was working with these entities reinforced our desire to use them.

Our knowledge of other approaches, such as French institutional psychotherapy, which combined the principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis with other sociological approaches influenced by Marxism, led us to develop a hybrid technique, with concepts taken from various approaches, but in which the principles of the therapeutic communities, centered on community and team meetings, predominated.

Thus we used them, successively, first in a day hospital context, which we worked on and developed while we were at Santa Maria Hospital and, later, in an in-patient unit at Miguel Bombarda Hospital, firstly with single-sex groups (as the infirmaries were also single-sex) and later, when we created mixed units, with same-type groups.

At the out-patients level we also worked with a heterogeneous, mixed group which met weekly and in whose members we achieved a positive evolution. But here we were turning more to a group psychotherapy inspired by group analysis than a community intervention.

In all of this, the influence of Foulkes was decisive.

