THE LANGUAGE OF THE GROUP
Monologue, Dialogue And Discourse In Group Analysis

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A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.
The Empty Space: Peter Brook
(Brook 1990: xi)

A sleeping man is not roused by an indifferent word but if called by name he wakes.
The Interpretation of Dreams: Sigmund Freud
(Freud 1900: SE 4/5)

Freud's hypothesis ... (was) that the process of becoming conscious is closely allied to or essentially characterized by the cathexis of word representation.
Therapeutic Group Analysis: S.H. Foulkes
(Foulkes 1964: 116)

INTRODUCTION

Free-floating discussion is the group-analytic equivalent of *free association*. The term originates in Foulkes' own writing and describes a set of key clinical concepts in therapeutic practice that distinguish the group-analytic approach. The use of association in this approach differs from its use in individual analytic practice(Kris 1990) and from the techniques used by practitioners of other group methods(Yalom 1975). This chapter explores these clinical concepts and the theory that underlies them. It is focussed on the language of the group - the medium of free-floating discussion.

I shall differentiate between three primary forms of speech that arise in the matrix of any group. At the most basic level *monologue*- speaking alone (with or without an audience) - is a form of individual self-expression. At the next level *dialogue* -a conversation between two people - is the form of communication that distinguishes a bipersonal exchange. And at the third level *discourse* - the speech pattern of three or more people - allows the free interaction of all its participants in a flexible and complex exchange that distinguishes the communication of a group (Moffet 1968). These patterns of speech are universal cultural forms arising in all communication and are present in the life of every group, although in no set order. Monologue can be understood as a soliloquy; dialogue as the resolution of opposites or the search for intimacy; and discourse as the work of a chorus.The maturation of the group and its members involves a progression that begins with monologue in the individual's first encounter with themselves. It moves to dialogue in the discovery of the other and then to discourse when an individual's multiple inner objects are externalized and encountered in the group. As indicated, the progression is a logical not a descriptive one; the group process itself does not necessarily follow this pattern.

The group-analytic approach is distinguished from other group methods in that neither of the two earlier speech forms are disregarded. On the contrary, both monologue and dialogue are encompassed by and integral to group-analytic experience. True discourse remains the defining attribute of group communication because the complexity of communication between two people when the introduction of a third transforms them into a group, alters the nature of the original relationship in a radical and profound way. The use of free-floating discussion allows a pattern of exchange to move freely between these different speech forms, each of which constitutes a distinctive type of communication. It is through this movement - from monologue through dialogue to discourse and back again - that the group-analytic method comes into its own, creating an arena in which the dialectic between the psyche and the social world helps to refashion both.

The paper continues with a section that draws on relational theory to differentiate between *one-person, two-person and three-person psychologies.* I then apply to these psychologies material drawn from language theory and consider the speech forms each of them allows. This is followed by a series of clinical examples that illustrate the approach with descriptions and commentaries on these speech forms as they arise in different therapy groups. It is followed with an exploration of how the use of language in clinical theory has evolved from monologue to discourse, from the couch to the circle. It traces developments from the original idea of *the talking cure* in Freud's work to the first emergence of the term free floating discussion in Foulkes' own writing and its subsequent development. The conclusion points towards a theory of discourse that will equip us to explore how:

> Psychotherapists are rediscovering that ...The depths of the mind are reached and touched by simpler words that speak in images and metaphors...a universal, timeless language, pre-dating contemporary ideas...that touches the heart, the ancient seat of the emotions; (and) that speaks to the soul...(Pines, in Cox and Theilgaard 1987: xxiv).

PSYCHOLOGICAL FORMS AND THE RELATIONAL FIELD

We are today witnessing the"the breakup of ... psychology into categories according to the minimum number of persons essential to the study of each branch of the subject" (Rickman 1950: 218). *One-person psychology* is concerned with what goes on inside a person; *two-person psychology* with reciprocal relationships and *three-person psychology* with the relational field of the basic family constellation - and with social roles and social relations derived from it. The first takes the nature of internal experience as its field and gives centrality to the mind as it is located in a body. Its psychological functions include sensation, perception, cognition, mood, memory, imagination, fantasy and the psycho-somatic link. The second takes the intersubjective world as its field, gives centrality to relationships - a domain beyond but including the individual - and its psychological functions include bonding and attachment, exchange, affect and the inter-personal link. The third takes social relations as its field, gives centrality to the corporate world - a domain beyond but including both the individual and the pair-bond - and its psychosocial functions include social interaction, social role and social meaning.

I shall proceed on the basis of an assumption made here, that a truly group psychology incorporates one-person, two-person and three-person psychologies and that these three psychologies stand as an adequately differentiated range of categories to encompass all human experience. The group is a matrix of interaction, a relational field that arises between its members and between the interplay of these three different psychologies. Field theory is the discipline by which these different psychological levels are related. It provides group analysis with an integrative frame by which the higher level functions in three person psychgology are related to more fundamental functions in one person psychology (Agazarian and Peters 1981). Skynner, applying field theory to group and family therapy, describes the isomorphic relationship between experience at different levels. Thus in a group changes in any one of its component psychologies will necessarily involve change in the others (Skynner 1976; 1987).

SPEECH FORMS AND THE SEMANTIC FIELD

Discourse, in one of its colloquial meanings, describes the communication of thought by speech, the exchange between someone speaking, someone listening and something that is listened to. It describes relations between narrator, listener and story (Moffet 1968). The structure of discourse is this set of relations amongst first, second and third persons. When the speaker, listener and subject are each distinct (or potentially distinct) as persons, that is, when two people are speaking to each other in the presence of a third person, we have the rudiments of a group. For the purposes of this paper I am using the term *discourse* to describe only this kind of group communication. In a two-person situation, when only the speaker and listener are present as persons, we have dialogue. And when speaker and listener are the same person, we have monologue.

In one of its colloquial meanings - in de Marre's paper above for example - the term *dialogue* does not refer to an exchange between only two participants (de Marre 1991). But for the purposes of this paper I am using the term in a more restricted sense to refer specifically to speech forms in which there are no more than two key participants who might be individuals, teams or - for example - gender groups. It thus serves to identify what is distinctive about a speech form based on an oppositional symmetry, reciprocity or duality in which the dialectic of the exchange is its key property. Where communication takes place between three or more participants, the term discourse is used to identify its more diffused properties.

Using a theory of language to examine group psychotherapy, we can see how the developing agency of the group's process begins at the first stage with the solitude of private encounters with the self that are allowed by the audience of the group. It leads at the second stage to greater agency for change when, through dialogue, others acquire psychic reality through conflicts over discrepant forms or levels of intimacy required of the same group experience. When the same experience has different meaning for its different participants, it exposes their different internal conflicts and can in due course help to resolve them. And this leads to the third stage - discourse - when the spontaneity of public exchange expresses individuals' primary process allowing the emergence of archaic anxieties and their reparative resolution. This is the kind of experience that has the most far-reaching consequences in terms of personal change. The most telling description of this kind of discourse is the way an individual's dream can be taken up in a mature group. As the last clinical example on pages 24 - 25 below describes, group members enter the dream together through a diversity of associations. In the discussion by which the dream content and its associations are explored in the here and now, we see the free play of words at work in the shared unconscious. As resonance in the group as a whole connects the one and the many, meaning is condensed and, in the sudden discharge of deep and primitive material, events happen in a moment that can last a lifetime.

Each of these speech forms can arise in a narrative form through the recounting or reconstruction of reported events; or a dramatic form in people's real experience of one another in the here-and-now of the group. The group's process is characterised by a fluid interaction between narrative and drama, between the stories people have to tell and the drama of their roles and interactions as they do so. Progress is seen in a shift from speech patterns that are initially dominated by narrative and description to more mature forms that include reflective dialogue and discourse; and then to a capacity to abstract and generalise from this experience, both inside and beyond the group. This progression recapitulates the child's primary pattern of growth in a decentering movement outward from the centre of the self. As Pines has described in this collection, the self enlarges in the group, assimilating the matrix of group relations and 'taking them in'; at the same time accommodating itself to this matrix and adapting to it. The paradox of this progression is that, as the intersubjective domain in deepened and enriched, participants become more themselves by moving outward from themselves.

The process of symbolisation originates with the most primitive sense of self in the representational schema of the infant as he differentiates for the first time between self and other. As the representational world is extended and externalised the infant's symbolising process is codified in a language whose semantic field is charged with forms of meaning that bear a close association to the individuals and experiences through which it originates. In this collection Eliott's, James' and Nitsen's papers all give careful attention to these early formative experiences. The way in which a child talks to itself, addresses its mother, relates to a friend, speaks to a doll or stands up to talk in the class-room can be different in each case. All these speech forms can arise in a dialogue between only two people for, as William James has said, relations are of different degrees of intimacy - merely to be with another, is a universe of discourse (James 1900). But whilst dialogue can generate an almost limitless range of meaning, the terms of a two-person psychology act as a constraint. Discourse in a group is extended far beyond this by a relational field that is almost as rich and indeterminate as its semantic field.

Through group interaction the relational and semantic fields - the matrix of interaction and the matrix of meaning - come to play upon one another giving new meaning to early symbolic and representational experience. Thus language is a form of behaviour in the group; a way of referring to experience in and beyond the group; and a way of transforming experience in the group.

CLINICAL ILLUSTRATIONS: MONOLOGUE, DIALOGUE AND DISCOURSE

Free-floating discussion proceeds through an interplay between narrative and drama, story and exchange, reconstruction and encounter. A reconstruction (by an individual or sub-group of some past event or trauma), or some other story in the group, might be a defense against the anxiety of an immediate encounter between its members. The drama of an immediate encounter might be a defense against painful stories about past or recent experience. *The examples that follow are designed to illustrate the gains to be had in clinical depth from the simple practice of establishing who is talking to whom about what?* As one speech form in either its narrative or dramatic form becomes evident as a defense, the therapist, or another group member, explores the defense to widen what Foulkes called *the common zone,* and this moves the exploration to another speech form through which it can be taken forward.

1 Monologue

> A man sits in the group recounting the circumstances that brought him into therapy. He has been with us now for three sessions and is beginning to find his voice. But as he talks peoples' attentiveness diminishes. He looks at no one in particular; his narrative is delivered now to the floor, now to the ceiling; he is agonised but self-absorbed and the group's resonance is against his self-absorbtion rather than with his agony. Despite the distress in his story about his wife's suicide attempts; their loss of love and his concern about their children, the group of initially sympathetic listeners becomes increasingly disaffected.
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> Initially people had been eager to ask him questions and their responses were sometimes visible in exclamations and other reactions. But the speaker appears indifferent to his audience whose primary value, it seems, is to provide him with the space in which to talk to himself. He has not yet recognized others. They serve him primarily as narcissistic containers. They allow this for some time but after ten minutes one group member seems to be dozing off; another stares out of the window; another looks to the conductor. As his monologue continues, two members smile at each other and look away. After fifteen minutes the conductor asks the speaker whom he is talking to. Startled and in some consternation he looks about him and says, well, to the group, and falters as he does so.

It is as if he has found himself alone on a stage without an audience. The process of decentering has begun, initiated by a conflict between the content of his narrative, and the limitations of his role. He recognises the disengagement he has been responsible for but is as yet without resources to communicate empathically. His problem in the world has become manifest in the group. He has spent most of his adult life as a "marginal man" caring for others at his own expense and often colluding with them when, despite his care, they neglected or overlooked him. Now he wants it all back but, consumed by neediness that he has spent a lifetime disavowing, he has no resources to enter reciprocal relationships.

To find a voice through which to reach others he must also find himself; the group first provides him with space and permission to discover his own psychic pain. If the therapy is successful we can expect to see, some months after its commencement, changes in his communication patterns in the group. From these changes he will be able to generalise, to effect changes in relations with his family and social network. The group is the arena in which psyche and social world acquire their first distinction from one another. It is here then that they can be reconciled in the interests of altered social relationships which are his primary therapeutic needs.

On future occasions when he has something to say, he will learn from the group's cues how to make eye-contact; how to come out of himself and how to begin bringing people with him in a narrative that allows empathy - shared emotion. *To have an audience whilst he tells his story, he will need to learn a different role.* He will need to allow others time to respond; to establish evidence of others' interest in him and his story; and to offer a sense of collaboration in their arena of shared interest. Of course, he will not learn this all at once and there will be many future occasions when the group recoils from his monologue. He will again use others as narcissistic containers to give him the space in which to find himself. This process of self-discovery will proceed hand in hand with his discovery of the 'otherness' of those around him. Other group members will keep him connected to integrative process, having themselves had cues from the conductor that his resources will allow him to tolerate the momentary discomfort and humiliation of a confronting interruption, in the interest of shared experience.

> Two years later the same man sits in the group with a lot to say about his inner conflicts; and about his problems in the world outside. In contrast to his earlier self-absorbtion, he now chooses his moment; speaks in shorter sentences; uses shared language; relates what he has to say to what he knows others' preoccupations will interest them in; and allows pauses for response and interruption.

It is visibly evident that he is now able to use the group process to work on his internal one. In the progression from his early monologue to a participatory role in the group's pattern of discourse, the man is learning to overcome his isolation in the group and is being steadily equipped to do so in the world at large. What he is learning in the group about intercourse will steadily equip him to live in the world, rather than in its margins. He is now socially engaged and, whilst the nature and manner of his self-presentation continue to arouse resentment amongst other members over issues of control and detachment, his internal conflicts and anxieties are now an integral part of a shared process and are thus open to understanding and resolution.

2: Dialogue

This progression from autistic, private alienation towards an openly identified and shared social process lies at the heart of the group-analytic enterprise. The distinctive speech form that arises through dialogue at the second level is illustrated by exchanges in two different groups that arise between two members in each case. The first describes the concepts of *valency*(Scharff 1991), and *mirroring*(Pines1982) and the second, those of *projection* and *projective identification*(Sandler 1988).

A: Valency and mirroring:

A man in his mid-fourties who has been using the group to come to terms with his divorce, shares with us towards the end of the session a poignant moment in his relationship with his teen-age daughter visiting him for the week-end. He tells us of how she has begun to talk to him about her menarche. He recounts in the group what she said about it and how she did so. People comment on how touching they find her openness with him, and on how moving they find the trust between them. He tells us his daughter has had mixed feelings; she was pleased but also awkward and embarrassed. Her mother - his former wife - has supported her practically and emotionally and this too he is pleased to acknowledge as he relates his daughter's narrative to the group. Sitting opposite him is a woman in her late 30's who - like him - has been in the group for some years. She is the only one of the 7 who says nothing at all. But she does not take her eyes off him as his narrative unfolds whilst different members engage with him at different levels and in different ways. She watches and listens attentively and in tears but will not be drawn out about her reaction. At the next session a week later, she initiates the discussion by telling us that she has not been able to get the picture of this man and his daughter out of her mind.

She wishes she had a father like him. She had not believed it possible that a young girl could trust her father so intimately with her developing sexuality. She wants to know more about their relationship and as he tells her she replies with detail - long known in the group but never explored in quite this way - about her relationship with her own father who abused her violently and sexually.

In the course of this dialogue the man opposite her becomes confirmed as the transference object for the good father she had always longed for and never known. She in turn furnishes him with the opportunity to reach and recover in the group a lost aspect of his self that can be benevolent and tender towards women. The benign quality of his generosity, as it emerges with increasing evidence of his resources as a good father, stands in dramatic contrast to the destructive person we have known about, in his relations with his wife. The emotional charge - the valency - between the two of them becomes the group's object of interest. One other woman, in particular, whose own history involved an unresolved Oedipal conflict, becomes excited and animated by what she sees happening between these two. She makes herself available to them as a facilitator and, as they talk to each other across the group, she moves their discussion forward at those points at which they reach impasse.

They are each, of course, talking to the group as a whole but they do so by addressing each other. They generate emotions in the group as a whole but they do so because of the emotions they arouse in the encounter with each other. These two people each find reflected in the other, the lost ideal of their respective parental introjects. They select each other for an exchange that involves, temporarily, more intense emotion than arises elsewhere in the group and through this they each provide a reparative mirror for a lost aspect of the other. In both these cases, however, each person's sense of the other is derived from a principal relationship with themselves. She experiences him as her idealised father and he, similarly, relates to her as the mirror image of women familiar to him in his own life experience.
"Otherness" for each of these people is derived from their unconscious primary preoccupations with their own internal objects. There is work to be done before they can each relate to another of the opposite sex as a genuinely "other" person, rather than as some reflection of their own internal imagery. The next example describes an interaction through which a conflict between two individuals in a group (over discrepant requirements for intimacy), at the moment at which long-standing internal conflicts acquire some resolution.

B: Projection and projective identification:

> Two people are closely connected in a group by complementary roles in their life outside. She has a son like him with whom she is engrossed. He has a mother who, like this woman in the group, he finds strident and intrusive. The valency that emerges involves an antagonistic preoccupation between them. He reports a dream to the group in which she, clearly recognisable, suffocates his father. As the story of the dream unfolds in the group she becomes increasingly angry and distressed. She is furious at the role in which he has cast her in his dream life and treats the dream - in so far as it describes her - as if he had chosen its content as a conscious attack on her and could be held responsible for it. She rounds on him and, as he defends himself against her attack, he becomes increasingly aggressive himself. The therapist eventually intercedes with a modest observation about her that has an astonishing effect on her. "It's his dream which you can learn from if you wish to, but in the last analysis it's *his* dream." In the discourse that ensues the whole group explores the hostile dialogue that followed the reported dream and she struggles with the realization that she has been trying to control the content of his psychic life.

The understanding this generates eventually leaves her in tears as she takes back the projections by which she has maintained this man - in her mind - as if he were her son. The hostile cathexis between these two - what Zinkin calls malignant mirroring - is being undone. It helps to resolve his anxiety that she will damage him with her projections, as his mother damaged his father. And it helps to resolve her separation anxiety about losing her own son. Zinkin uses the term malignant mirroring to replace, with a single process, the experience of two distinct projective identifications that have a symmetrical relationship with one another (Zinkin 1983). As we can see here, it is the experience of dialogue that links the two individual's experiences and resolves the valency they hold for one another. The dream illustrates how he lived with the fear of damage - the fear of what her projections could do to him - and identified with this fear. Projective identification has been the basis of their valency, in this case malignant mirroring, a hostile cathexis.

At the point of this confrontation she experiences him for the first time as a genuinely "other" person and is freed by this realization although she is shocked by it for some time. And he undergoes a comparable experience. These events allow her to generalise from the group to her life in the world and in particular to the relationship with her son whom she has bound with her projections for much of his life and is fearful of losing.

She is distraught as she begins to take all this in and for some weeks is depressed in the group. This in turn arouses compassion in the man who, witnessing her distress over the way in which she mis-related to him, appreciates her - for the first time - as a genuinely "other" person, rather than the projected representative of his damaging mother. So he appreciates her as a genuinely different person and can relate constructively to her needs. And this in turn helps her consider how, by relinquishing control, she might gain rather than lose.

3: Discourse:

The examples above illustrate the free-floating nature of group discussion as it moves between them all three speech forms, with the conductor providing a minimum of direction. Rather than seeking to press the group's exchange towards one pattern or another, the conductor regards the speech form expressed by the group as a source of information as to what is happening in the matrix. In the example below discourse is initiated by information from one of the group's members, but there is neither monologue nor dialogue. Discussion is maintained by the group as a whole and, in our attempt to analyze it, individualistic concepts are of only limited value.

> In a twice-weekly group of many years standing, events are dominated by increasing evidence of peoples' development and differentiation. One evening one of the members, a man who has struggled against his parents' envy of his youth and their attacks on his individuation, discloses that he has finally reached a crucial financial target in the business he established. The figures are startling and unexpected but - for the moment - his achievement does not earn the regard it merits in the group.

> One of the men, facing major financial dilemmas in his own company, is withdrawn and unresponsive; another, successful in his own career, explores the issue constructively, but for some time there is a limpness about the group's responses and, in their reluctance to confirm evidence of this man's progress, they behave like his parents who resent the fact that he has been successful on his own. Discussion moves round to one of the women who is expecting a baby. She is finding her position in the group sometimes difficult to protect.
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> What is most striking is the reaction of the two other women to news of the pregnancy. She has struggled to conceive and has finally been rewarded by a healthy pregnancy. Since then one of the women has left the group unexpectedly, and now the other woman, the mother of a small child, offers a disproportionate amount of advice, punctuated with references to ectopic pregnancies and other disasters.

The issue of envy lies beneath the narrative. All seven members participate in different ways and the atmosphere is coloured by tension between affirmation on the one hand, and anxiety and antagonism on the other. People have struggled for years together and are really very close - they do wish to affirm one anothers' success. Despite their affirmative desires, they experience serous problems of envy. After 45 minutes the conductor offers an interpretation of the tension, suggesting that people are anxious about each other's envy of their own progress and, perhaps, ashamed of their own envy of others' progress.
The quality of the exchange alters, relief allows disclosure and the second half of the group session is taken up with a wide-ranging exploration of envy and jealousy in intimate relations.

It is not a new subject in this group and people are accustomed to exploring the less acceptable aspects of their own personalities with one another. It ranges over mens' envy of womens' creativity aroused by the prospect of a woman bringing a new baby into the group; and womens' envy of mens' penises or potency in their reaction to the financial and career success reported on at the outset. Neither of these envious forms is exclusive to either gender and this too is recognised and discussed, as is the acute anxiety that a number of members acknowledge about the prospect of envious attacks from those closest to them as they progress through their therapy.

The group's exploration is open and diffuse; there is no exclusive narrative line, and no single contributor. To understand the group we should have to consider the texture of its discourse rather than merely the text of its narrative. In a mature group at this stage we see that the "the conductor strives to broaden and deepen the expressive range of all members, while at the same time increasing their understanding of the deeper, unconscious levels (Foulkes 1964: 112). In the texture of the discourse we discover what Foulkes called,

> A *common zone* in which all members can participate and learn to understand one another. *The zone of communication* must include the experience of every member in such a way that it can be shared and understood by the others, on whatever level it is first conveyed. (Foulkes 1964: 112)

The zone of communication in this group now incorporates the shared fear of others' envy and the shared sense of shame at acknowledging envy of one's own. It leads on to the recognition that developmental arrest and some of the other forms of neurosis discussed in the group are attempts at envy pre-emption (Kreege 1992). What concerns us here is the way this recognition is arrived at. One member provided information about his success at work which led through group association to another's reference to her pregnancy. The first introduced a subject - ambivalence about progress associated with internal conflict and the fear of external attack- to which another resonated. This theme was amplified by resonance in the group as a whole which extended the exploration. From the introduction of this theme to its amplification, exploration, analysis and resolution there was one focussed but brief interpretation by the conductor which set him apart from the others but, for the rest, discourse in the group to which the conductor contributed like the other members, was responsible for its progress. The theme that provided the group's focal conflict (Whittaker and Lieberman 1965) in this session rested on an anxiety as to whether the group could relate to its members as a generative rather than envious parent and provide them with confirmation for their progress. For the group as a whole to be experienced in such positive terms each of its members needed to find their individual part in the destructive envy anticipated from the others.

We would fail to take advantage of the real benefits of group-analysis if we confined our attention to content analysis of the text. An attempt to characterize a discussion like this requires concepts that describe context as well as content; texture as well as form; ground as well as figure; and group atmosphere as well as the dynamics of the individual. The development of group-analytic theory has not, regrettably, developed to characterize group process in this way because of the difficulties we continue to experience in characterising the complexity of such exchanges(Skynner 1987). "Our concepts and technical terms," says Balint, "have been coined under the physiological bias and are, in consequence, highly individualistic; they do not go beyond the confines of the individual mind (Balint 1985: 228). A theory of discourse should help to clarify how "inner (mental) and 'outer' reality merge inside the common matrix of interpersonal social reality, out of which they originally differentiated." (Foulkes 1964: 98) Our attempt to conceptualise change is now assisted by the distinction provided in this account between the relational and semantic field. By exploring their interplay,

> It becomes easier to understand our claim that the group associates, responds and reacts as a whole. The group as it were avails itself now of one speaker, now of another, *but it is always the transpersonal network which is sensitized and gives utterance, or responds. In this sense we can postulate the existence of a group 'mind'* in the same way as we postulate the existence of an individual mind. (Foulkes 1964: 118)

The group "mind" can now be understood as the composite of its semantic and relational elements.

FROM THE COUCH TO THE CIRCLE: THE EVOLUTION OF TECHNIQUE

1 Freud's talking cure and the first fundamental rule

Brown's paper in this collection gives a comprehensive account of how the metapsychology of psychoanalysis has been revised by object relations theory. I am here concerned with the implications of this change for clinical theory. In his early collaboration with Breuer, Freud recognised that the crucial ingredient in their treatment of hysterics was free word association - what one of his patients called "her talking cure" - rather than hypnosis. His original idea "that whatever comes into one's head must be reported" (Freud SE12: 107) was later set out as the "fundamental rule of psychoanalytic technique" Freud SE12: 107):

> A rule which structures the analytic situation: the analysand is asked to say what he thinks and feels, selecting nothing and omitting nothing from what comes into his mind, even where this seems to him unpleasant to have to communicate, ridiculous, devoid of interest or irrelevant. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1983: 179)

The analytic relationship dictated by this rule emphasises its linguistic content, establishes the neutrality of the analyst and helps to foster the regression of the patient. It has a further consequence which, like the use of the couch, is a remnant of the hypnotic method out of which it evolved - it confines the work of psychoanalysis to the patient's monologue.

Freud's original paradigm was an intrapsychic drive psychology whose formulations are those of a one-person psychology concerned with the individual in isolation. He maintained the use of the couch for the protection it afforded him from uncomfortable interaction with and exposure to his patients; and for the benefits it brought to treatment, minimising the extent to which free associaton was contaiminated by dialogue. (Freud SE 12: 134)

The critique of classical theory took issue with these limitations. Balint, "for want of a better term" but in language that has had momentous consequences, introduces "the *object* or *object-relation* bias" on the grounds that "all our concepts and technical terms" except these two "have been coined under the physiological bias and are...highly individualistic; they do not go beyond the confines of the individual mind".(Balint 1952: 226, 228) Today the concept of counter-transference has been recast as a valuable clinical tool; the analyst's subjectivity has been brought into the therapeutic arena as an acknowledged resource, rather than as the troublesome intrusion Freud had earlier believed it to be; and free association, stripped ot its unnecessary drive theory, has been reconceptualised in the context of a two-person psychology focussed upon the dialogue between patient and analyst(Lewis 1990), "an interrelation between two individuals ... a constantly changing and developing object-relation", a "two person situation" (Balint 1952: 231)

2: Foulkes' development of free-floating discussion

Foulkes' work has taken the same line of development one stage further, providing us with a clinical method that allows the participation of three psychological objects in the associative process. Free-floating discussion rests on what he called his "model of three". Although the maximum composition of what could be properly called a group is indeterminate and controversial, its minimum number is three. Between the dyadic experience of a pair and the group experience of three there is a transition just as radical and profound as that between one and two. Whatever the size of a small therapy group, the model of three gives it its underlying emotional structure. There is an indeterminate maximum in the number of individuals that can be present in any group, and there may be more than one conductor. But there are only three categories of psychological object - the individual, the conductor, and the group as a whole. In the bounded space between these three objects, we find a three-person psychology at work.

Like Freud before him, Foulkes worked towards and arrived at his method before naming it. Described initially as "a kind of group associative method", the term enters his primary text well after his first descriptions of its use. He then returns to it frequently, refining and redefining his descriptions and, in explaining how it evolved, recounting how he initially treated peoples' associations in the group individually. Only later did he become "aware that it was possible to consider the group's productions as the equivalent of the individual's free association *on the part of the group as a whole"*.(Foulkes 1964: 117)

> If one allows one's "floating attention" as Freud termed it, to record automatically its own observations, one begins eventually to respond to "pressures and "temperatures" as sensitively as any barometric or thermometric gauge with something akin to an internal graph of change on the cerebral "drum" of the therapist.(Foulkes and Anthony 1968: 142)

The group matrix is the "operational basis of all relationships and communications"(Foulkes 1964: 118). It has both a relational and semantic field. Through the interplay of these two fields, free-floating discussion allows "the construction of an ever widening zone of mutual understanding within the group",(Foulkes 1964: 116) which Foulkes regards as its manifest content. This is understood to relate to the latent meaning "as a manifest dream relates to latent dream thoughts"(Foulkes 1964: 118). In the course of group discussion symptoms (manifest content) are translated into their meaning (latent content) and this:

> "Transforms the driving forces which lay concealed behind them into (new) emotions...members learn a new language ... previously spoken only unconsciously," in the course of which "they (become) active participants in their own healing process" and undergo change at a number of levels. (Foulkes 1964:176)

The group analyst works as both as therapist and group member beginning with the dynamic administration of the group and the initiation of free-floating discussion. He assumes a more active role in a new group and allows the "decrescendo" of his own role as the group gains authority. He is responsible for identifying disturbances in the group's process - what Foulkes calls location - and for providing a balance between analytic (disturbing) and integrative forces, as the manifest content is translated into language that describes the unconscious. Transference is prominent but the work is undertaken in the dynamic present. One of Foulkes' own descriptions of the conductor at work gives a vivid account of the clinical role which contrasts dramatically with Freud's account of the psychoanalyst at work behind the couch (Freud SE 12: 134)

> He treats the group as adults on an equal level to his own and exerts an important influence by his own example. He sets a pattern of desirable behaviour rather than having to preach ... puts emphasis on the 'here and now' and promotes tolerance and appreciation of individual differences...(He) represents and promotes reality, reason, tolerance, understanding, insight, catharsis, independence, frankness, and an open mind for new experiences. This happens by way of a living, corrective emotional experience. (Foulkes 1964: 57)

In contrast to the first fundamental rule in individual practice described above, the group analyst is supportive as well as analytic and the linguistic content of the therapy relationship is not so paramount. Regression may occur but it is counterbalanced by a progressive role through which group members become active participants in their own healing process. Finally, the group analyst's role is neither neutral nor detached. The quality of his engagement is evident, as is his readiness to maintain a human position that will serve the group's members as a model. *Foulkes' clinical recommendations to the conductor can be summarised as a responsibility for promoting discourse* (Foulkes 1964: 57)

CONCLUSION; TOWARDS A THEORY OF DISCOURSE

A twice-weekly group meets for the first time after the Christmas break. Its members have common difficulties making or sustaining relationships. Joan reports that she had a terrible time over the holiday. It was like the roof caved in. Susan says she was also pretty shitty. Adam says he was fantastic. He had no contact at all with his recent girl-friend but went abroad on a working trip with a different girl, an old chum who doesn't mean much to him and with whom there is no intimate relationship. He no longer finds his current girl friend attractive and, although they speak every day on the 'phone, he was pleased not to have to see her over the break. Whilst abroad with the new one, he got on like a house on fire. Anne takes up the image of the house on fire in one case, and the collapsing roof in another. She finds parallels between them; others agree. Adam is directed by the group to look at how he was now treating this girl-friend as an earlier partner had once treated him. The attraction he once described to us is now replaced by repulsion. He couldn't bear the thought of being close to her body. He talks a lot about attraction and repulsion. Susan knows only too well what he meant, she says, referring to her loss of sexual desire, and when she feels this way there is nothing her husband can do about it. They just have to wait until her sexual feelings return.

Joan had described to us in the last group (before Christmas) how loved she felt by her partner. He had sent her flowers and a lovely note whilst he was away on a business trip. But once they were together over Christmas, the roof caved in. He just wasn't there with her. In the group people know her well and question whether she wasn't the one who vacated the house first. As the subject of attraction and repulsion, intimacy and withdrawal is taken up around the group, a new sense of acceptance and recognition enters the discussion.

Adam is ready to consider how he will find someone attractive providing there's nothing whole-hearted in how they find him. If they're genuinely attracted to him, in ways that reflect his own attraction towards them, he loses his feeling for them. His own sense of desire becomes repulsive. He can't tolerate two whole-hearted people in the same relationship. If they get on too well, the house on fire brings the roof down.

The group is not dealing with Adam's manic flight; nor with Joan's depression, nor Susan's disorder of sexual desire nor the reaction of the group as a whole to the recent Christmas break. Nor is it dealing with the common relational problems they mirror to one another. It is dealing with all of this simultaneously and as the relational matrix generates a semantic field this in turn helps to transform their relationships inside the group and beyond.

In this semantic field, meaning is condensed by a number of key images which enter the word play of the discussion. A disorder of sexual desire is an empty house; passion can bring the roof down; desire can become its opposite; two whole hearts can produce an empty house. The group's subject is not simply the series of static images by which it is reproduced here. A sense of profundity accrues as the process of discourse - now a chain reaction of associated images - develops a symbolic language by which the tension between hope and fear is brought out and, over time, resolved.

In a couples group of some years standing, with three couples and a therapist, one partnership was under discussion for some weeks. Prior to joining the group they separated and came together several times in a seemingly intractable pattern of conflict and reconciliation. The session reported here marks the turning point in their conflict. He has been convinced for some time they should separate and he wants her to leave the house.

> He brings a dream to the group in which he is with her on a luxurious ocean liner. He leaves her inside and climbs a gangway that looks as if it is going somewhere but it leads him over the side; he falls into the sea and the boat sails away. There is a much smaller boat nearby which he swims towards. As he struggles in the water he then sees a red flag floating nearby. He tries to secure the both the red flag and the boat but the current keeps them apart and in the attempt to have both he loses everything and knows he will now drown. One of the other men invites the dreamer to offer his own associations to the dream. As he begins to do so, the third man enters the discussion with his own associations based on different imagery. The three women then enter the discussion. The woman who fears abandonment is barely interested in the dream and much more concerned with where she will live if he insists she should go. The two other women are closely identified with her. A dialogue develops between the men and the women as to where the discussion should go; the men want to discuss the dream's imagery but the women address the relationship conflict at a concrete level.

> After a prolonged and fractious exchange that includes material from the two other couples, we are reminded by the partner that the dreamer's son recently sent this couple some red roses as a token of hope for their reconciliation. There is a sense of startled recognition in the group as everyone see these roses as the warning flag in the sea. The discourse acquires a new vitality and, towards the end of the group, the therapist offers an interpretation that extends this recognition. He suggests that the dreamer, like all the group's members, is deeply bound to his partner and has discovered in his dream that if he gets her to walk the plank, he'll end up in the sea himself. The man laughs with relief at being understood but she doesn't know whether to laugh or cry and looks from him to the therapist saying "Yes, yes, yes". The discussion continues with humour and appreciation to the end of the session. In the weeks that follow this imagery is returned to repeatedly as the couple emerge from their conflict and bring their new-found affection and good will to bear on the other couples' conflicts.

The exchange moves between monologue, dialogue and discourse. There is both narrative and drama in each of these speech forms as we move between real and reported experience. Language is working here to generate mutative metaphors that come in a moment that can last a lifetime. At such a moment, "a sense of mystery, astonishment, and uniqueness ... transcends any descriptive technicalities."(Cox and Theilgaard, 1987: 17) As Cox describes it,

> We have a fragmentary glimpse into therapeutic space. It emphasizes the universal pull of the primordial. It is an intrinsic part of the psychotherapeutic process in which a patient comes as close to his true feelings as he dares...Metaphor affords the possibility of engagement with those primordial themes to which all our experience gravitates. (Cox and Theilgaard 1987:9)

In this group the dream is first a soliloquy, a way of thinking aloud about the viability of the partnership and the fear of separation. Then it becomes the subject of a dialogue, initially between this man and his partner and then between the men and women in the group as they are all drawn into a review of their relationships. Throughout the session it is the subject of discourse, yeilding moments of profundity in which the group works like a chorus in an ancient drama, challenging private deceits with public recognition and confirming private recognitions with public affirmation. Free floating discussion thus encompasses all three speech forms but it provides more than simply direct access to primary process. It is also the means by which associative patterns are analyzed and explored, new forms of meaning are constructed and a new sense of the individual emerges in the widening cycle of the whole.

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