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Ethical and Aesthetical Aspects of Group Analysis

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Group Analysis and Philosophy?

As a primarily *social-psychological* theory, does group analysis also have *a philosophical* relevance? There are several reasons why the answer to this is not evident. One of these is well stated in M. Weegmann´s recent book on *The World Within The Group* (Weegman, 2014). Based on the work of H. Cohn (1996), he argues that ´Foulkes` ´wrote little on his philosophy, and what there is is dispersed and suggestive rather than systematic` (Weegmann, 2014, p.37). Whether this is a valid judgement we might leave suspended for the moment. Another

argument put forward in favour of philosophy was given by G. Gödde. At the end of his essay on *Schopenhauer and Psychoanalysis* (2012), he argued that psychoanalysis as any other psychology ´is in need of a philosophical anthropology, because its basic assumptions depend on *implicit* philosophical concepts and preconceptions` (Gödde, 2012, p. 17; italics mine). According to Gödde, to reflect on its meta-theoretical foundations therefore is ´inevitable` (Gödde, 2012, p. 17). This clearly applies to group analysis too. This applies to group analysis too. Foulkes´ ´basic conviction` (Foulkes in Foulkes&Anthony 1984, p. 23), that ´*Man* is primarily a social being` (Foulkes in Foulkes&Anthony 1984, p. 234; italics mine) and his conclusion that ´the group is a more fundamental unit than the individual` (Foulkes in Foulkes&Anthony 1984, p. 23) obviously claim an anthropological validity

that clearly exceeds the subject area of any psychology. A

further argument was provided by Lacan who in his Rome

discourse (Lacan, 1953) emphasized that what an analyst

in his practice must be prepared to meet ´at its horizon` is

´the subjectivity of one´s time` (Lacan, 1953/2006, p.ö

264). However, just to confirm these arguments as

appropriate is too general to do justice to my task today

which is more specifically focused on *ethics* and

aesthetics. Building on Gödde, we may ask though

whether there are underlying philosophical concepts

which inform(ed) ethical and aesthetical   aspects of

group analytic theory and practice.

Foulkes and the Ethics of Leadership

In January 1949 Foulkes gave a talk to the American

Group Society Association in New York. Discussing

problems of leadership, he presented his American audience with a lucid account of the principles of group analytic psychotherapy including the political aspects involved . A couple years after the end of the World War II, he pointed to the fact that in German the use of the term ´leader` had been deeply compromised by the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini (oddly enough he did not mention Stalin). Due to this, he argued as a term it had become ´politically flavoured` (Foulkes, 1984, p.54) and therefore was no longer suitable to describe the role and function of the group analyst and his performance in the group. Instead Foulkes suggested to ´replace it by the less pretentious term of *Conductor*`; italics mine) whose ´guiding principle` was always ´the therapeutic function`.(Foulkes, 1983, p. 133 . Considering this ´function`, he was anxious to explain that what the group analyst *desires* is to ´*wean* the group from

the *infantile need for authoritative guidance`* (Foulkes, 1984, p.61; italics mine). By refusing the position of ´an absolute leader` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 60), the conductor initiates a process of change by which the group´s ´dependence` on his authority is replaced ´by reliance on the strength of the group` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 63). It struck him that this specific aspect of his talk ´was *not* apparently appreciated by part of the New York audience at the time` (Foulkes, 1984, p.54; italics mine). Twenty years later, in his opening address to the First *European Symposium on Group Analysis* in Lisbon in 1970, Foulkes returned to the subject when he referred to ´two phenomena` based on unconscious processes which he said ´we do not like to be reminded and which we tend to underrate` (Foulkes, 1990, p. 211): Firstly, ´the astounding conformity, the ultimate conformity of the group with its leader` (Foulkes, 1990, p.

211) and secondly,´ the great power of suggestion,

conscious and unconscious ` which conductors do have on

their groups (Foulkes, 1990, p. 212). As a consequence,

groups continuously tell their conductors ´what they, the

therapists ultimately expect and want to hear` (Foulkes,

1990, p. 211). Clinically, Foulkes considered this as so

important that, as he said, ´any true theory of group

behaviour (....) should *start* from this phenomenon`

(Foulkes, 1990, p. 211; italics mine). What group analytic

treatment is aiming to achieve is ´to free the group from the

automatic force of this tendency to compliance and

conformity` (Foulkes, 1990, p. 211; italics mine). Although

in Lisbon he only repeated what he had been saying in

New York twenty years earlier, Foulkes seems even more

skeptical that this aim could be successfully achieved.

Compared to the to the ´automatic force` of compliance

and conformity the power of interpretation seems to be weakened to such an extent that it needs be ´counteracted` rather than resolved by analytic means (Foulkes, 1990, p. 211; italics i.orig.). To explain the unconscious roots and reasons of this ´force`, Foulkes once more leaned on what he said ´is known from psycho-analytic investigations` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 59)`. Whereas in 1949 , he had mainly referred to Freud´s arguments put forward *Totem and Taboo*, namely that ´in the unconscious phantasy of the group, the therapist is put in the position of a primordial leader *image*; one who is omniscient and omnipotent and the group expects magical help from him´ (Foulkes, 1984, p.59). This image ´*of an omnipotent, godlike father-figure*` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 60`) and the craving for it is indeed reminiscient of the Freudian fresco of the ´primal father` of ´primal horde` depicted in ´*Totem*

and Taboo`. In 1970, Foulkes built more on Freud´s

arguments outlined in *Group Psychology and the*

Analysis of the Ego` (Freud, 192, SE 18), mainly on this

idea that the essential mechanism operative in ´the

formation of the ´great artificial masses` like the church

and the army (Freud, 1921), is the process of ´binding

together` formerly separate individuals into members of a

mass. For Freud, this ´binding` is based on a particular

form of identification, where the social other is treated like

´one´s own ego` (Freud, 1921, p. 140.). Due to this

narcissistic identification (which later was conceptualized

as a projective identification; cf. Klein 1946) the social

other becomes ´idealized` and thus an object of worship

(Freud 1921, SE 18, p.112). However, as Freud discovered,

the dynamics of idealization are not restricted to mass-

formation. There are also effective in states of falling in

love (Verliebtheit) and/or hypnosis. Common to all of these states of mind is the psychic fact that the ´grandeur` of the love object submerges the ego - which today we would call the self –up to the point where the ego´s love and respect for itself is almost completely consumed that according to Freud its ´self-sacrifice follows as a natural consequence` (Freud, 1921, p. 112). Once ´introjected ` into the ego (to use Ferenczi´s term) , the idealized other causes a structural change, an ´alteration of the ego` (Freud, 1921, SE 18, p. 112) giving rise to its willing submission under foreign influence. Similarly, once the leader of the group is instituted as such a collective ego-ideal`, the group members are left in a state of unconsciously chosen dependence on his image, a process Freud compared to hypnotic suggestion. Under these conditions the group members like the lover and the

analysand in love of his analyst are willingly prepared to sacrifice their individuality, their capacity for judgement and their personal values. In his group analytic reflections on leadership Foulkes basically followed Freud ´s understanding, and particularly his analysis of the dynamics of transference. Like Freud, he considered transference as the ´motor force`  (Foulkes, 1990, p.274) as well as the principal form of  ´resistance` in analytic psychotherapy (Foulkes, 1990,. p. 216). And like Freud Foulkes continued to emphasize the intimate nexus between transference, love and idealization, Freud had elucidated. Ultimately, compliance and conformity in groups are being based on the effects of transference, especially the positive transference ´in the infantile and true sense of the term` as he said  (Foulkes, 1990. p.216).  It is for the love of their leaders and the  subsequent loss of  personal ´ego identity`

the group members unconsciously seek what Foulkes described as ´complete submission to the conductor´s conscious and unconscious opinions`(Foulkes, 1990, p. 2011). In so far, transference may become the most stubborn  resistance  to the group analytic goal of a ´cooperation on equal terms  between equals` (Foulkes, 1984, p 65). In search of the philosophical substance of this claim, we might have a look at the beginning of Kant´s essay on *What is Enlightenment* ? (Kant, 784). According to Kant ´enlightenment is man´s emergence from his *self imposed* nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one´s own understanding without another´s guidance. This nonage is self imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one´s own mind without another´s guidance` (Kant, 1784, p. 1). What we can gather from t/his statement is, first of

all, that Freud´s psychoanalytic project including its group analytic offshoot are firmly rooted in the movement of the *European Enlightenment* as a period and as a project. Considering their reasons and principles, they both continue this its intentions and ethical imperatives. And although from a group analytic point of view we may want to argue about Kant´s wording ´to use one´s own mind without another´s guidance`, we will not want to do this with regard to his conclusion: *´Dare to know*! (Sapere aude)`. However, the *ethics* of psychoanalysis are not just a repetition of Kant . It is related to a vertex particular vertex which we have seen was formative for Foulkes too. This is the imperative to renounce on the yearning for an all powerful father-figure and to temper the ´need` for his ´authoritative guidance` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 61; italics mine). Psychically, this can only be accomplished by an ´act` of

mourning (Allouch, 2012) which is always personal. What is to be mourned is ´the *image* of an omnipotent, godlike-father figure` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 60; italics mine), i.e. the ´infantile *image* of authority` Julien, 2008, p.29; italics mine). It is only by giving up this image and by tempering the need for its presence , internally and externally, the subject will become able to untie what Lacan once called the ´knot of imaginary servitude` (Lacan, 1953, SCH ) . Although over time various contexts and versions of mourning have been elaborated within the different analytic schools, like, for instance, Klein´s seminal concept of the ´*depressive position*` (Klein, 1934) or Winnicott´s theory of *illusion and disillusionment* (Winnicott, 1951) in which the object of mourning was displaced from paternal to maternal omnipotence alike (cf. instance by Chasseguet-Smirgel (1989), Kernberg (1989) , Volkan,

1999), this shift ´from stressing the leader as an idealised father towards an idealised, nourishing mother` (Volkan, 1999, p.47) has not really invalidated Freud´s structural analysis of the submission of the self in relation to an omnipotent Other. Moreover, focusing on group analysis as an approach in its own right, we must not forget that from the beginning this Freudian kernel was interwined with a political impetus. For Foulkes, the ´type` of leadership to be desired was, as he said, ´the leader in a democratic community` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 64). Based on this, Foulkes considered both the external as well as the internal resistances to this aim as obstacles to a ´democratic way of life (Foulkes, 1984, p. 64). This is why Foulkes emphasized that ´the qualifications required on the part of the conductor` have an *´essential* affinity` for ´good world citizenship` (Foulkes, 1984, p. 64). Regarding this claim it

is somewhat surprising though that for Foulkes the conducor ´can be said to be the first servant of the group` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 139). He must that by using this wording he quoted a saying from Frederic II of Prussia who had declared: `I am the first servant of my state`. (Haffner & Venohr, 1980, p. 36). Differing from from Louis XIV and his famous dictum *L´etat c´est moï*`, Frederic favoured an ´enlightened absolutism` and at least acknowledged that even the king is subject(ed) to the law and not above it (Haffner & Venohr, 1980, p. 37). Rather than speculating about the psychological substance of Foulkes´ identification with one of the most complex, ambiguous and traumatized characters of German history (cf. Lürßen, 1994), we may notice the close affinity between the quotation and Foulkes´ understanding of the role and function of the conductor. Although he maintained that the

conductor is ´submitting himself completely to the *needs* of the group`, he likewise insisted that he does not ´fall in with everything the group wants` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 27; italics mine), namely with its wish to remain dependent on him. Therefore, it is for *ethical* rather than psychological reasons, the conductor does neither give up the *desire* to wean the group from the need to be dependent on him nor the refusal to take on ´absolute leadership`. Paradoxically, to persevere in this attitude leaves him at risk to be denounced as a ´père sévère`, a strict father.

The Basic Law of Group Dynamics

When he reviewed Elias´ book on The Process of Civilisation (Elias, 1937), Foulkes acknowledged that Elias´ approach offered the possibility of an extended analysis super-ego formation. He pointed out that

psychoanalysis so far had traced the sources of the ´superego formation in the human species mainly in two directions: firstly, the phylogenetic one, as the precipitation of pre-history (Oedipus-complex); secondly, the psychogenetic one, as an outcome of the history of the individual` (Foulkes, 1990, p. 81). It was Elias, he maintained , who supplemented these sources when he introduced the ´sociogenetic principle` which he said was ´historical` (Foulkes, 1990, p. 81). However, it was Foulkes himself who ´supplemented ` them once more when he introduced the idea of a ´Basic Law of Group Dynamics` . According to this ´law` he suggested hat *collectively*` the members of a group *´constitute the very Norm from which, individually, they deviate`* (Foulkes, 1983, p. 29-30; italics in orig.). Now, the ´Basic law of Group Dynamics` has never received much attention after

Foulkes. Although .D. Brown in his *Annual Foulkes Lecture* dedicated to the subject discussed a variety of fascinating topics from intersubjectivity to details of Foulkes´ early life, he somehow evaded to address t/his topic. He didn´t discuss Foulkes´s ´law` in any great detail.

. This is unfortunate because if there is anything of ´philosophical` interest in Foulkes´ work, it is it is his claim of a ´Basic Law of Group Dynamics `. As even the wording of this of this ´law` is complicated, it might be useful to read it again.. The group members, Foulkes argued, *´collectively`* constitute the very norm from which *´individually`*, they deviate. This implies that with regard regard to values and norms Foulkes considered the group a ´working whole` (Foulkes, 1944, p. 36). This view is consistent with the ´wholistic` or ´systemic` view of society which Foulkes had adopted from his teacher Kurt

Goldstein. As they ´form part of the whole social system to which they belong`(Foulkes, 1944, p. 36), the values and norms of a given society including its law and justice ´have no absolute and unalterable validity` (Foulkes, 1944, p. 36). Instead, there is a *circular* causality between individual and collective values and norms which is the basis and the background of the law of group dynamics. For Foulkes, its explanation ´is not really surprising`, because:the community itself, of which the group and its members are but a ´miniature edition` *determines* ´what is normal, socially accepted behaviour`(Foulkes, 1983, p. 29ff; italics mine). Each individual, he maitained, ´is to a *large extent* a part of the Group, to which he belongs` and ´this collective aspect permeates him all through (…) to the his core` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 30; italics mine).However, ´to a *smaller* extent, he deviates from the *abstract* Model, the

Standard, of this ´Norm`, he is a *variant* of it` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 30). And only ´this deviation makes him into an Individual, unique, which he is again all through, even to the finger prints` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 30; italics mine). In this context, it is vital to note that although the individual is *permeated* by the group all through it is never *totally* so. Consequently, there is something individual which keeps on escaping the norm. We will have to return to the question what this is. The construct(ion) of this ´Basic Law of Group Dynamics` lies at the root of the group analytic understanding of identity and therefore is also relevant regarding the analysis of the superego. This becomes clear, when we consider how Foulkes conceptualized the origins of social values and cultural norms and their transmission from one generation to the other, a process he described in detail in his book written together with J. Anthony :

´The culture and values of a community are inescapably transferred to the growing infant by its individual father and mother *as determined* by their particular nation, class, religion and region. (…). Even the objects, movements, gestures, and accents are determined in this way by the representatives of the cultural group. On top of this, but all permeating, is *the particular individual stamp* of the individual father and mother` Foulkes in Foulkes and Anthony, 1984, p. 27; italics ours).

Acting as the ´representatives of the cultural group`, it is the particular parents of a particular individual person who hand over thte cultural values and norms of a given community to their growing infant. As they are always mediated by parents who have been determined both by their particular social background and by what Foulkes called their ´particular individual stamp`, cultural norms and values are never *directly* transmitted. Due to this, infants and children never deal directly with cultural values

and norms as such, but only with the parental *interpretations* and communications of them. Accordingly, the process of socialisation in the family is not based on *generally* accepted norms and values, but only on particularized, ´familio-centric` *versions* of them, the origins of which are as unconscious to the children as they are to their parents. As a consequence, the parental ´messages` transmitted to the child – messages which it cannot help but to translate with his own limited means - are ´compromised` and thus are ´censured` (Freud) or ´enigmatic` (cf. Laplanche, 1989) particularly by the parental super-ego. This is why the process of transmission of norms and values is inevitably bound up with the psycho-sexual development of the protagonists, namely with their Oedipus-Complex which forms ´the minimal, but very effective social link` that the child must evolve in

order ´to make himself recognized as a member of society who counts for others and on whom they can count` (Apollon, 2010, p. 115). Therefore, the reason why the members of a (sub-) group together constitute the very social norms and values from which they individually deviate is because they have internalized in their superego and ego-ideals the culturally accepted norms and values of a given community. However, brought up by *individual* parents from different strata of the community, they differ from the standard norm in terms of ´class, religion and region` or even ´nation`. And they differ in terms of the varying unconscious parental interpretations of these normations. These *interpretations* of culturally valid normations constitute the highly individual kernel of the superego-ideal, which can neither be understood nor analysed without referring to dynamically unconscious

psychic facts as well as to unconscious social facts. For this reason Foulkes could rightfully claim the existence of a ´social unconscious` supplementing *´the unconscious in the Freudian sense`* (Foulkes, 1984, p. 52; italics i. Orig.). And in addition to this, he could claim that the working through of transference situation in individual analysis ´has an equivalent in the group` and therefore differs from the working through of the superego and the transference(s) within the group ((Foulkes, 1983, p. 164-165). It is because the group as a ´Forum` is likely to represent the community as a whole, it can embody both collective and individual aspects of the superego, which, according to Foulkes in the last instance ´represents the restrictions imposed by the community on the individual as imparted by parental authority` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 167-168; italics ours). Accordingly, it is only by working through the (repressed)

authority of the parental superego can we become free(d) enough to confront and to modify unconscious socio-cultural constraints, which are often based on political oppression, and vice versa. According to Foulkes, ´the collective situation reduces the severity of censorship inside the individual and the Id becomes liberated` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 164). This liberation becomes possible because ´the group sets up its own its own boundaries under its own weighty authority, which is a good match for the ancient superego ` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 164). Saying this, Foulkes indeed addressed the difference and the struggle between more generally accepted social exigencies and their parental interpretations played out in the arena of the group. ´At bottom`, this struggle is ´one between the individual´s instinctive impulses and his group´s cultural taboos` (Foulkes in Foulkes&Anthony, 1984, p. 27). Under the

condition of communication ´under reduced censorship` (Foulkes in Foulkes&Anthony, 1984, p. 56) this struggle can become conscious, and thereby ´valuations and norms are re-stated and modified by comparison, contrast and analysis` (Foulkes in Foulkes & Anthony 1984, p. 27). Accordingly, Foulkes´ analysis of the superego illustrates what he described as ´the Basic Law of Group Dynamics`

On *Moral Intimacy*

To describe the analytic group there as an arena of conscious and unconscious struggles between different values, norms and normations, namely the difference(s) between familio-centric and socio-centric norms, is philosophically relevant. It is because then moral conflicts are at the heart of the matter of what happens in groups. Psychoanalytically, this perspective is reminiscient of R.

Money-Kyrle´s attempt to understand mental illness as ´the result of unconscious moral conflicts` (Money-Kyrle, 1961; cf. Money Kyrle, 1952). Due to want of time and space, I will not discuss Money Kyrle´s work in any greater detail.. Instead I will turn to the work of the Swiss philosopher, Peter Bieri who until his retirement taught philosophy in Berlin. In 2011, Bieri gave three lectures on the question *How Do We Want To Live?*. In the first lecture titled: *What would be a self determined life*? , he discussed moral consciousness and its relation to self-determination, starting from the insight that we are not ´mental islands` (Bieri, 2011, p. 27), but depend on the social other. Accordingly, from a moral point of view it is the interest of the other rather than one´s own which determines our actions. For Bieri, this ´core of moral respect and consideration` (Bieri, 2011, p. 28) must necessarily coincide with autonomy

because moral consciousness can neither be based on anxiety nor be considered as a ´mere fulfilment of an arid duty` (Bieri, 2011, p. 28). Instead, it has to be understood as an ´expression of self-determination` (Bieri, 2011, p. 28) This includes, as he said, of course the ´possibility` to limit our comprehension of morality as something ´in the best interest of an enlightened, reasonable self-interest: sticking to moral rules, we are all better off` (Bieri, 2011, p. 2). However, this is *not* ´the whole story` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29). For Bieri, there is another, more *interpersonal* aspect of morality. Between human beings`, he states, exists a meeting of minds which people experience as valuable in itself which is why we may call it *moral intimacy*` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29; italics i. orig.). It gives rise to complex and deep moral sentiments which are impossible to occur in between people ´who consider themselves only as

antagonists to be reckoned with`(Bieri, 2011, p. 28). For Bieri, the sentiments involved include ´indignation and resentment, moral shame and repentence, but also feelings of loyalty and admiration for moral accomplishments` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29). Due to experiencing these feelings, he argued, human beings become ´important for each other in a way they could never have become as merely rational beings in the social game` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29). Moreover, ´they become important not only for each other, but also for themselves`(Bieri, 2011, p. 29). As it implies and displays ´the capacity for an inner, critical distance to themselves`, ´moral intimacy` is a relation between human beings, which is only possible for and in between *persons* ´who are able to question and to determine themselves` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29; italics mine). Therefore, it ´does not jeopardize self-determination and thus is not something to be only teeth-

gnashingly endured` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29). To the contrary in it is ´the natural expression of self determination` (Bieri, 2011, p. 29). Considering Bieri´s notion of *moral intimcay* in the light of Foulkes´ reflections on the struggle of values and norms in the group analytic group, it seems to capture an essential element of what can happen in groups at an *experiential* level. In this sense, we could understand it as a key ingredient of personal experience(s) in analytic groups. This is well illustrated in another of book of Bieri, which inspired the title of my talk. Here, the philosopher returns as a novelist, *Pascal Mercier,* who tells the story of a Swiss teacher taking the *Night Train To Lisbon* (Mercier, 2004); a story the Danish film director *Bille August* meanwhile turned into a major European film (August, 2013). Thrown out of the routine his rather withdrawn and isolated life (at the beginning, we see him playing chess

with himself), *Raymund Gregorius*, a Latin teacher on the daily walk to his school, prevents an unknown young women to jump off a bridge in central Bern. The woman then mysteriously disappears, leaving him with nothing but a red raincoat. In search of her, *Gregorius* boards the night rain to Lisbon where he suspects he might find her. Taking ´the-non problem seriously` as C. Garland put it so well (Garland, 1982) he gets involved with a group of Portuguese people and comes across the events of Portuguese history in the nineteen-seventies, a time we remember as the *Carnation-Revolution.* As the stories unfolds, Gregorious (with the assistance of an woman ophtalmologist) gets a clearer vision of himself and also access to long forgotten feelings as he encounters the various characters of the novel. At the end, which in the book differs from the end of the film, he returns to Bern

where he disappears into a clinic. At the end of the film we see him standing on the platform, in front of the train where he is confronted by the doctor´s question: ´Why don´t you stay?` It is rare that a novelist is able to flesh out the conceptual work of a philosopher. This is what Pascal Mercier has achieved for Peter Bieri. Moreover, *Night Train To Lisbon* adds substance to the struggle of values and norms between the members of a group as they are ´determined by their particular nation, class, religion and region` (Foulkes in Foulkes & Anthony, p. 27). Moreover, it also make us aware that to *´interpret`* these conflicting values and norms in ´familio-centric`terms is not enough. It is equally important that they become subject to debate and dialogue, a dialogue which according to Pat de Maré *´functions without final truths`* (de Maré et al, 1991, p. 47) and involves both a critique of all conventional meanings

imposed on the subject by a given society and a continuous questioning of authority. As as forum for such a dialogue, the analytic group is the opposite of what R. Senett a while ago identified as the *´tyranny of Intimacy`* where `closeness between persons is a moral good` and ´the ideology of intimacy transmutes political categories into psychological categories` (Sennett, 1976, dtsch., p. 293). It is not for nothing that ´group dialogue` for de Maré engenders *´koinonia`*, i.e. an *´impersonal* fellowship`(de Maré et al. 1991, p. 4; italics mine) or ´citizenship`(de Maré et al. 1991, p. 86) he characterised as a ´transitional state between kinship and lawship` (de Maré et al. 1991, p. 89)

Notes on Aesthetics

Foulkes concurred with Ackermann´s view that psychotherapy is both ´an Art and a Science` (Ackermann,

1945). In his works, he provided telling metaphors to demonstrate the *art* of group analytic therapy, for instance when he compared the role and function of the group conductor as akin to the ´musical conductor` (Foulkes, 1975/1990, p. 292) of ´an orchestra`(Foulkes; 1983, p. 135; cf. Pisani (2014) or ´similar to that of a poet or a writer in the community` (Foulkes, 1986), p. 157; cf. Campbell, 2012). However, although he even he referred to his own esthetic sensibility when he disclosed that ´personally, I approach group processes in a way akin to music` (Foulkes, 1964/1984:163) Foulkes did never enter into a serious dialogue with particular works of art. Unlike Freud, E. Kris or D. Meltzer who made *The Apprehension Of Beauty* an element of psychoanalysis (Meltzer, 1988), he did not make issues of art and aesthetics a particular focus of his attention. Nonetheless, there is an aesthetic

vertex in Foulkes´ work. Unexpectedly, we find it on the

first page of his first book (Foulkes, 1948) where he

summarized Goldstein´s neurobiology of the *organism and*

its adaptation to the environment. Regarding processes of

adaptation, he maintained that ´there is always a *creative*

element present, even in the simplest form of adaptation`

(Foulkes, 1948/1983, p. 1; italics mine). He wrote:

The organism acts *as if it knew* its aim and had *a choice* as
to the means to achieve this aim. It *chooses* those means
which suit best all the prevailing conditions, inside itself
and outside itself` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 1; italics mine)

Isolated as it stands and without a proper context, this

statement must remain almost incomprehensible for the

uninitiated reader. According to Goldstein, ´the organism

has *definite potentialities*, and because it has them it has the

need to *actualize* or realize them` as he wrote (Goldstein

1940/1951, p. 146; italics mine). To suppose, as Foulkes

did that the organism acts *as if* it knew its aim implies, first of all, that it does *not* know it. However, if its action is not informed by *knowledge* (as we understand it) how then shall we comprehend its *cause* other than to infer that the organism must have at least a vision (however blurred) or an idea (however dim) of t/his potential and its aim. As a consequence, its action has to be based on an act of *imagination* existing prior to any categorical knowledge whatsoever. Therefore, it is this *faculty* of imagination which Foulkes invoked in this statement. In philosophy, this faculty which for Kant mediated between sensuality and reason is defined as the ability to represent an object in the mind without its presence. .Needless to say that to raise this issue we are in front of a vast territory which for want of time and space we can not hope to map out here. Nonetheless, it is clear though that by emphasizing the

importance of imagination, Goldstein seems to have revised

Kant´s transcendental scheme and, subsequently, to have

reverted the order of his three *Critiques* in favour of the

last one: the *Critique of Judgment* . To think that *Pure*

Reason may not come first and might in fact be preceded by

imagination was indeed a daring thought, put forward at

the time by Kant´s contemporary, J.G. Fichte. Taking this

into consideration we cannot help but to realize that

Goldstein´s neurobiological notion of the organism

confront us with serious philosophical questions which

still have hardly been tackled, let alone been clarified.

This is also true with regard to Goldstein´s further claim

that ´an organism is governed by the tendency to actualize

its individual capacities as fully as possible` (Goldstein

1940/1951, p. 141) . In his view, there was ´only one drive,

the drive of self actualization" (Goldstein 1940/1951, p.

142). Considering this claim, we must not forget that heuristically and ontologically, the individual can only ´actualize` whatever  potential it has with regard  to what Goldstein called the  ´total situation`, i.e. in relation to the *constraints* and *restraints* (Hopper) of a given social-historical situation (a fact by the way seemingly forgotten by the Goldstein´s American pupils, A. Maslow and C. Rogers). Foulkes alluded to this when he quoted   Erikson´s saying that the ´individual´s mastery over his neurosis begins when he is put in position to accept the historical *necessity* which made him what he is` (Erikson quoted by Foulkes, 1983, p. 13; italics mine). However, in spite of the fact that the organism or ´the individual as a whole` are being determined by the total situation,   this determination is never absolute.   As I have shown above Foulkes ´ had explained this with regard to the ´Basic Law

of Group Dynamics` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 29-30), but he left out the complexity of Goldstein´s philosophical argument. To claim that the organism, ´acts *as if it knew* its aim`and ´ had *a choice* as to the means to achieve this aim`(Foulkes, 1983, p. 1) is to claim that at the root of human subjectivity there is an act of subjective imagination which escapes the logic of fact and reason and thus defies social determination. When he defined personal ´well being as consisting of an *individual* norm of organized functioning` (Goldstein, 1939, p. 333; italics mine), Goldstein defied the relevance of ´the concept of a statistical norm` (Goldstein, 1934, p.265). He did this on the basis that as a living being the ´organism` makes sense of the world by investing it with a ´meaning` of its own. Inhabiting such a *self created* world, the organism (as any living being) is, philosophically speaking, strictly ´for itself``, living in a world *created ex*

nihilo, but not *cum nihilo*: created out of nothing but not without something (cf. Castoriadis, ….). This is why Foulkes – although he never provided the argument for it - could claim that in adaptation there is ´always a *creative* element present`. For Goldstein, the subject of Biology – which he himself wanted to be considered as a kind of ´philosophical anthropology` (Goldstein, 1971, p. 12) ´has to do with individuals who exist and who strive to exist, i.e. to actualize their capacities as fully as possible within a given environment`(Goldstein, 1951. Foulkes added to this when in his review (Fuchs, 1936) of Goldstein´s book (Goldstein, 1934), he approvingly quoted Goldstein´s claim: ´Biological knowledge is the *continuous and continuing creative act* by which we increasingly appropriate the idea of the organism as part of our /psychic/ *experience*`. (Foulkes, 1990, p. 52; italics mine;

translation modified by me). However, for Goldstein and for Foulkes this ´creative act` was obviously limited to the individual person. Although Foulkes defined the group matrix as an ´ever expanding netwok of communication` (Foulkes, 1990, p. 213), he never considered the possibility of a creative capacity residing in the anonymous collective, an idea which seems to be implicit in Pat de Maré work on large groups (cf. De Mare et al., 1991). A contemporary philosopher who did much to elaborate on the subject of imagination, was the late C. Castoriadis. According to Castoriadis, there are ´two mutually irreducible poles` of radical imagination (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 145): the ´singular psyche` on the one hand (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 146) and the ´radical imaginary` deploying itself ´as society and as history` on the other (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 143). Whereas the radical imagination of the human psyche

is subject(ed) to a process of ´socialisation` which Castoriadis called the ´the social fabrication of the individual` (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 148), the ´radical imaginary` is located in ´the field of social-historical *creation*` (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 146; italics mine), which as a field is engendered by the *´collective anonymous*`(Castoriadis, 1991, p. 143; italics mine). As Castoriadis claimed, the work of this ´radical imaginary` is ´instituting` (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 145) as it *creates* ´the institution of a society as a whole` (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 85). Regarding a *particular* society as it is ´instituted`, he speaks of the *´magma*`(Castoriadis, 1997) of ´the social imaginary significations which hold *this* society together` (Castoriadis, 1991, p. 85; italics mine). From Foulkes´ statement that ´what the community supports, *quite blindly and instinctively*, is determined by its life conditions,

historical and present` (Foulkes, 1983, p. 31), we can infer that he although he lacked the term, he was in no way ignorant of the imaginative power residing in the collective-anonymous. However, Castoriadis´ philosophical reflections on power, politics, and radical imagination provide us with a conceptual framework going beyond this intuition. Helping us to understand more profoundly de Maré´s distinction between the ´socializing of the individual`(de Maré et al., 1991, p. 1989) and ´the humanizing of society`, they add conceptual clarity and precision to what we actually mean when we talk about the ´socialisation` of the psyche (as we do with regard to the social unconscious) in relation to the ´humanizing` of the social (which we do with regard to ´group dialogue`). In turn, this might lead to a refined conceptualization of ´group associations` as described by Foulkes and de Maré

concept of ´group dialogue`. Thank you for your attention.