Section: The Context of Group Analysis contd.

Kierkegaard and Foulkes: The Advantages of Group Therapy in Treatment of Despair ('. . . a sickness of the spirit, of the self . . .')

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In this article it is proposed that group therapy can be viewed as a deep-going psychotherapeutic procedure that can offer much more than the widely acknowledged forms of individual therapy, through the examination and appropriate contrasting of the philosophies of Kierkegaard, an existential philosopher, and S.H. Foulkes. Both sought ways in which individuals could free themselves from the rigid structure of their dysfunctional behaviour and develop their individuality, so that they could live in harmony with themselves and others.

Key words: anxiety, existential issues, group setting, individual therapy, therapeutic factors

The Rise of Group Therapy

> . . . there is not a single human being who does not despair at least a little, in whose innermost being there does not dwell an uneasiness, an unquiet, a discordance . . . an anxiety about a possibility in life or an anxiety about himself . . .' (Kierkegaard, 1989/1849: 52)

More than 80 years separate Kierkegaard's recognition of man's fundamental fear of conscious selfhood as the cause of his alienation from himself and others, and Foulkes's decision to introduce group therapy to help those who structured their characters in ways that not only protected them from anxiety but also blocked self-awareness and constricted personal development.

The group setting was to provide a much-needed arena for identifying individuals' difficulties, working through distortions and restoring the balance of their minds, in the presence of and through interactions with other troubled 'selves'. Foulkes's proposal to introduce group therapy as a form of collective treatment met with much opposition from the analytic world. The resistance of the analytic community to group therapy stemmed from doubts about the effectiveness of analysis conducted in a multi-personal situation, devoid of the intensity and depth to be found in the individual setting. These suspicions were shared by many potential patients who came to view group therapy as an inferior kind of treatment that was less intensive, superficial, and less likely to effect any genuine and more lasting personality change. Kierkegaard would also have probably been highly suspicious of what might have seemed to him like a mass treatment. His fierce opposition to mass phenomena stems from his belief that transformation of character can only take place within man through a deep inner experience, which is a highly individual affair. Foulkes himself was very much aware of the risk that the notion of group analysis carried with it.

> . . . the name group analysis may mislead some people into thinking that they have to do with psycho-analysis in groups, a sort of substitute or cheap edition, embarked upon perhaps to economize time or expense. (Foulkes, 1964: 38)

Foulkes addressed this widespread misconception about group therapy by stressing that therapeutic analysis was 'the opposite of a crude mass treatment, out for quick results' (1964: 100). He proceeded to clarify that group therapy provided opportunities for intimate individual contact with each participant and with one's own hitherto denied parts, describing a group-analytic situation 'as a very delicate, subtle, intense, highly individualized affair' (1964: 100). Those patients who sought shelter in a group from the intensive searching of the individual treatment were soon led out of the illusion that the group was a safe haven from the dreadful freedom of being an individual. For group analysis 'like all psychotherapy puts the individual into the centre of its attention' (Foulkes, 1964: 39).

Not only can group analysis be as effective as individual treatment in dealing with the basis of neurotic conflicts and suffering, but because of 'group-specific' factors identified by Foulkes, and to which I will refer, it has proved in many ways to be superior to the dyadic treatment. I will begin by looking at the

emotional condition of the person who comes to therapy and the main concepts/ideas underpinning group treatment.

The Universality of the 'the Sickness unto Death'

Many tributes were paid to Kierkegaard for providing us with a penetrating analysis of the human condition and for showing us the numerous ways in which people deceive themselves and continually run away from themselves. He took great pains to describe 'the sickness unto death', which is not a physical condition but a disorder of the 'self', of the 'spirit', in other words, a manifestation of a disturbed relationship to oneself. According to Kierkegaard, man's primary concern should be with striving to achieve true selfhood, with restoring the balance to the self which is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, of the physical and the spiritual. As long as man structures his character and his lifestyle in such a way as to avoid the real perception of reality he is in a state of 'shut-upness', a prisoner of his own defences which cripple his growth and freedom. Kierkegaard tells us that the man who is constantly failing to measure up to his goal, that is, total transparency of 'true' selfhood, is in a state of despair whether he is conscious of his failure to be a self or not.

Individuals who seek help through therapy nowadays can be regarded as being in a state of 'despair' or 'shut-upness', in other words 'sick unto death', in Kierkegaard's language. Most of them have succeeded in erecting thick defences against anxiety, protecting their fragmented selves, yet seemingly functioning as a whole. Although the language used to describe human problems has changed – perhaps now it would be more appropriate to use terms like 'repression' and 'inner conflict' – the nature of human affliction seems the same as it was when Kierkegaard diagnosed it in the 19th century.

Foulkes recognized the complexity and universality of man's tendency to deceive himself and others when he wrote that:

> In fact we are all in the same boat. These are human problems, arising out of the clash between our fundamental impulses, anxieties, and reality: in particular the requirements of the community in which we live, the various prohibitions and restrictions which . . . accompany us at every step. (Foulkes, 1964: 23)

This echoes Kierkegaard's belief (1989/1849) that there is a plague of 'spiritlessness', that most of us are 'dead souls' too weak to be

'spirits', that is, to be completely transparent and honest about ourselves. Kierkegaard goes so far as to regard all 'spiritless men' as being in sin, 'for sin can be defined as despair at not willing to be oneself or at not willing to be oneself before God' (Roberts, 1957: 122). In his view we are all touched by despair, and so, we are all in 'sin', or, as Foulkes points out, 'we are all in the same boat'. It seems that it is mainly those whose despair reaches the level of consciousness or starts to interfere too much with their functioning in the world who nowadays seek salvation in individual or group therapy.

Group Therapy as the Answer to 'Despair'

Foulkes emphasized that group therapy aimed at basic and lasting changes in one's personality, rather than just alleviation of symptoms. On this point he seemed to be in agreement with Kierkegaard whose not so clearly formulated idea of 'therapy' consisted of man's breaking his spirit out of the prison of his character defences and facing the anxiety about the truth of his situation. In his words, 'the direction is quite normal . . . the self must be broken in order to become a self . . .' (Becker, 1973: 88). Once Kierkegaardian man has gone through the painful experience of destroying the defences against conscious selfhood, he opens himself up to the ultimate Power, the infinity, drawing his strength from his connection to God rather than from his sense of connection with his fellows. Foulkes chooses what, at first glance, may seem a different route for the individual who has emerged from the common matrix of the group, by placing him back in the group, where he can now function much more satisfactorily.

> Group psychotherapy helps to reconcile the individual to the group and to strengthen his roots in it, roots which are often disrupted by the complexities of modern living. (Foulkes, 1964: 53)

These seemingly contrasting choices of Kierkegaard and Foulkes of the destination for the individual seem to introduce a rift between the two thinkers, but a closer examination of their positions will reveal that the resulting opposition is only apparent.

It is striking, however, that while Kierkegaard's emphasis seems to have been on what was happening *within* a person, Foulkes focused on what was happening *between* individuals. Foulkes rejected the notion of the experiencing subject as such, that is, the

individual in isolation, whom he saw as part of a context, a situation. He introduced the notion of a communicational matrix as the common ground between individuals, the field in which interactions take place and which 'ultimately determines the meaning and significance of all events' (Foulkes, 1964: 292). Foulkes recognized the powerful influence of the surrounding culture, particularly of the family culture, on the character structure of the individual, and the absurdity of psychological exploration of the subject as an isolated entity. He saw the lack of social integration and disturbance of communication with others as a root of emotional problems and maintained that mental disturbances were multi-personal phenomena. Thus, his high appreciation of group therapy was based on his recognition of man's social nature and of the basic need to relate to others (1964: 109). Although Foulkes conceived of mental illness as occurring within a complex network of interpersonal relationships, and, in his own words, 'this multipersonal network of communication and disturbance is in fact the object of treatment' (1964: 66), he did not neglect individual members. He insisted that 'the whole process takes place solely for the benefit of the individual member' (1990: 154) and is meant to help members to develop their own individuality.

Kierkegaard's ideal man, in his striving to meet a higher standard of selfhood, gains in strength by relinquishing the support of those around him and by grounding himself in transparency before the Ultimate Power. At this point one might easily think that moving into what seems to be an exclusive relationship with God removes the individual from the world of human connections. Such a view would be very remote from Foulkes's contention that it is the experience of an effective interaction between the member and the group that gives the individual a sense of independence and strength. However, in the light of Kierkegaard's extreme concern over the possibility of man losing his individuality in the conformity of the crowd and the social scheme of things, for many his view of the individual as an 'absolute' does not come as a surprise.

Before examining the meaning of Kierkegaard's position, it should be noted that if we choose not to see beyond the extremity that seems to reside in it, one of the dangers is that the self that has transcended the social self and stands before God may become a kind of substitute for the self one can no longer 'put together' in social life. Such a move into an exclusive relationship with God may become an attractive option for those individuals who, unable

to establish a satisfactory connection with their fellows, prefer to shun their social selves in favour of the selves that would take up the privileged position of being fully accepted by God. Kierkegaard's own biography is a testament to the undeniable truth that the life of the individual person cannot be abstracted and considered isolated from its context. Our lives are 'whole and entire', private *and* public.

> Shaped by the public, the private returns to reshape the public . . . Kierkegaard's struggle for personal authority, for recognition in his family, led him to solutions that bore directly on larger questions of authority in Denmark as a whole . . . Private life isn't so private, and biography and history cannot be neatly separated. (Hannay and Marino, 1998: 39)

Foulkes probably would have protested against the split that Kierkegaard effected between social and personal life, which can be seen as an artificial boundary that only isolates the individual further from others. He made it clear that 'both aspects, the individual and the social one, are not only integrated in our approach (group-analytic), but their artificial isolation – never found in actual reality – does not arise' (1990: 148). In view of man's constant and inevitable interaction with the world, 'inner' and 'outer' reality permeated through each other inside the common matrix of interpersonal social reality.

> What is inside is outside, the 'social' is not external but very much internal too and penetrates the innermost being of the individual personality. The 'objective' external 'reality' is inseparable from the . . . individual whose world it is and therefore is part of the 'psychological' reality as well. (Foulkes, 1990: 227)

This statement can be regarded as a direct criticism of the psychoanalytic differentiation between an 'internal' (personal reality) and an 'external' (social reality), which led to the study of the individual in isolation, rather than 'as a social being in a social context'. (Foulkes, 1990: 277)

Kierkegaard and Foulkes's Vision of Personal Growth

I propose that Kierkegaard and Foulkes shared not only a deep concern for the personal growth of individuals, but also a vision of how the attainment of 'selfhood' might enable them to establish more healthy relations to others. Such a proposal has arisen from my exploration of the following question: in attaching so much

weight to the relationship of man to God, is Kierkegaard's intention to isolate the individual from others, or is it possible he has more expansive plans for him and, in fact, would like to see him reunited with his fellow men? In addressing this question I reconsider the meaning of one of the central notions in Kierkegaard's thinking, namely that of 'being before God'. We already know that Kierkegaard sees the 'I–Thou' encounter with God as the only way of putting an end to man's alienation from himself. This is so because, before God, understood more as a symbol of principles including those of truth, love and justice, one has no alternative but to stand in transparency, to be honest about oneself. Seen from this perspective, God becomes the criterion of selfhood and the 'eternal' to measure up to. Kierkegaard believes that, only by being related to God as the centre of truth and love, can natural man find courage to raise himself above human standards that keep him in sin, that is, alienated from the truth about his condition. If truly committed to the task of knowing himself in transparency before God, man gradually establishes the Godly principles of truth and love in himself, and thus proceeds to the stage of emotional maturity.

With regard to Foulkes, we note that his supreme concern, too, was that individuals succeed in their task of attaining maturity. A closer look at Kierkegaard's and Foulkes's notions of maturity reveals that both wished that individuals could find courage to probe into the deeper layers of their selves in order to illuminate those aspects of themselves from which they have long been separated. Both seem to share a view that the purpose of such confrontation with lost and hidden parts of oneself is to increase self-awareness, which is the gateway to freedom. Since a lack of self-awareness results in individuals' inability to be spontaneous and creative, both Kierkegaard and Foulkes seek a solution, first and foremost, in cultivating openness and inner honesty. The reward that, according to Foulkes, awaits a group therapist who guides his patients through the group experience in the right way is 'growing emotional maturity of his patients, their increasing capacity to tackle problems and conflicts by their own efforts, their growing sense of self-reliance, confidence, responsibility and independence' (1990: 134).

The reason for the emphasis that Kierkegaard and Foulkes place on directing one's life toward greater maturity and freedom is at least twofold. First, a greater degree of transparency that maturity entails can become a stimulus for abandoning illusions about the

powers of others and impel each individual towards taking responsibility for building up their own strength. Individuals are then in a better position to cease embedding themselves in a web of someone else's powers and can begin to refashion their links with those around them in a way that promotes their growth.

Second, a sense of inner integrity allows individuals to act with self-confidence in the interpersonal context, a fact that was recognized not only by Foulkes, but also by Kierkegaard. The mark of a mature man is that, as he discovers his own uniqueness, he develops appreciation and tolerance for the uniqueness of others. As he travels round his inner landscape, which in the process of self-reflection becomes more and more differentiated, he enjoys his growing capacity for broader perceptions and experiences. He also experiences himself as able to transcend the existing inner and outer structures, and perceives the world and those around him as having a similar potential for a greater openness to the individual differences, constant change and diversity that permeate the reality. Such an open personality views self and others not as static entities, but as individuals whose perceptions are always adapting to the inner and outer circumstances. Furthermore, with these changes comes an increased sense of inner strength that allows each individual to respond more spontaneously from their own centre, without having to resort to a whole arsenal of protective strategies to alleviate anxieties in their relations with others. The individual's former attempts to cope with and defend their weaker self against others by trying to overpower them or by withdrawing from the sphere of social connections, are replaced by a more healthy engagement in relationships based on empathy, sharing, mutuality and respect for differences amongst other people.

Foulkes is very emphatic in his claim that individuals should seek wholeness and unity for their 'dispersed soul' by entering the group situation, which offers the opportunity for creating new lines of communication distorted once within their original group, be it a family or a community. A group setting creates, in many ways, a better arena for confronting the individual's inner conflicts that were the origin of all tension between them and their fellow men. Foulkes seemed to be aware that, in the group climate of intense multi-personal interactions, one gradually develops greater understanding and respect for others and, therefore, for life itself. By entering into self-knowledge man learns to love not only himself in the right way, but also others who, as he discovers, share his experience of being

human. This growing capacity to live more fully is likely to take individuals beyond the confines of the mental field of a therapeutic group and to culminate in respect for all human beings. In religious terms, such an attitude towards others is usually described as love for humankind, which is often marked by a feeling experience of oneness. We now seem to be approaching the stage where, in Erich Fromm's words, 'God ceases to be an outside power, where man has incorporated the principles of love and justice into himself, where he has become one with God' (Fromm, 1957: 63).

After this clarification of the notion of maturity, we may again consider whether Kierkegaard's intention in grounding the in-dividual in God is really to create distance between him and his fellow men. It is true that Kierkegaard was deeply concerned about man who avoids the possibility of independence and more life by holding on to people who are his shelter and his protection against the world. Kierkegaard had great contempt for those who, cursed by 'shut-upness' themselves, enslaved others in a network of belittling interaction, and it is perhaps such people that he wanted the individual to move away from.

It needs to be remembered that, in Kierkegaard's view, for the project of selfhood to go well, it is not sufficient that individuals have merely some notion of themselves as God-grounded. The formula for the eradication of despair demands, first of all, recognition that there is something eternal in the self, and that God provides standards to which to aspire. Once 'human existence becomes conscious of itself as spirit', it opens itself up to the world of true possibility, of real freedom. As we have seen in the exploration of the concept of maturity, becoming oneself pre-supposes development toward self-consciousness that eventually transforms each individual's relationship not only to themselves but also towards others. In his thorough treatment of the Christian ethics of love, in 'Works of Love' (1847 in Hannay and Marino, 1998), Kierkegaard makes a serious point about the relationship between love of God and love of the neighbour:

> Love God above all else; then you also love the neighbour and in the neighbour every human being. Only by loving God above all else can one love the neighbour in the other human being. (Hannay and Marino, 1998: 359)

> When you go with God, you need to see only one single miserable person and you will be unable to escape what Christianity wants you to understand – human similarity. (Hannay and Marino, 1998: 364)

Kierkegaard states boldly that love for the neighbour, that is, everyone, cannot be separated from the love for God – love for the neighbour is mediated by the commanded love of God. Christian doctrine also requires that people love their neighbours as themselves, to which Kierkegaard adds: 'You shall love yourself in the right way' (Hannay and Marino, 1998: 360). Loving oneself in the right way becomes possible only when man recognizes his possibilities as a spirit, as well as his limitations as a finite being, and by striking the right balance between the two, allows himself to live more fully. As we have seen, in the process of gaining maturity people move from the realm of necessity into the world of possibility, which involves learning to respect their own individuality and that of others. When individuals can respond to themselves and to others from the position of respect and insight into the human condition, they develop a capacity to enter into human relationships more spontaneously and in ways that can be enriching to their lives. I would suggest that the notion of the 'I–Thou' encounter with God is likely to provoke much less controversy if it is understood as an expression of Kierkegaard's passion for man's commitment to truth and honesty, that puts an end to his estrangement from himself as well as his estrangement from his neighbour, that is, everyone.

Such understanding of Kierkegaard's and Foulkes's positions allows us to narrow the gap between the two thinkers whose shared view was that the arduous process of personal growth is the best means of restoring harmony between individuals and their world. I would go so far as to say that they both pursued a direction indicated to them by the ethics of love.

Superiority of Group Therapy in Curing 'Despair'

Foulkes believed that any form of therapy that failed to recognize or underestimate the importance of man's social nature and his need for communication and reception was inferior to group-analytic therapy. He was careful, however, to point out the distinction between group analysis as practised by himself and other forms of group psychotherapy including 'group psychoanalysis' and 'analytic group psychotherapy' (1990). What seems to set the group-analytic approach apart from other group models is its recognition of the importance of both the individual and social aspects. In Foulkes's words 'its focus is on the psychodynamics within the

matrix of the group, though it is undertaken for the sake of therapeutic analysis of each individual member' (1964: 85).

Although Kierkegaard regarded social relationships as secondary it seems that it is the social aspect of group therapy that often provides better opportunities for man to transcend his fragmented self. In the group atmosphere of mutual revelation, it is more likely that many resistant individuals will get involved in the process of self-disclosure more freely than they would in a dyadic situation. Members of groups usually vigorously push for change and demand a more healthy interaction through relentless criticism of one another's defective ways of relating. Therefore, they stand a better chance of successfully penetrating through defences than a therapist does in a dyad where his neutral stance precludes attacks of such intensity.

The fact that the group is composed of a number of unique individuals facilitates the emergence of multiple stimuli in the common field. This generates more material and opens up areas for exploration into which the individual might not look in a dyadic situation. When individuals are brought out of their isolation into a social situation they meet unrecognized or suppressed parts of themselves in other members and recognize a variety of symptoms displayed by others as expressions of similar unconscious conflicts. Perception of similarities and of universality of human impulses acts as a potent therapeutic factor in that it relieves anxiety and guilt. One of the most valuable gifts individuals can get from the group is feedback from others, which facilitates growth of their awareness of the significant aspects of their interpersonal behaviour. The quality and amount of such feedback surpasses those that the individual is able to obtain in dyadic treatment.

Kierkegaard (1849) was quick to point out that such delving into the depths of one's self necessitated the individual adopting the right emotional attitude. His contention was that anybody wishing to achieve a genuine transformation of his self should go through the process of introspection in the spirit of deep personal emotional engagement rather than that of objective exploration. Foulkes holds that the group is 'the best tool to operate on man's innermost structure . . . and the best place to study the Individual in his social aspects, alive and direct' (1948: 16). Because the material generated in a group setting is 'alive' and multi-dimensional, it usually stimulates emotional engagement more effectively than the self-reflective report of the individual that is 'removed' from the

immediate experience. In the therapeutic dyad, the therapist's posture of emotional neutrality often fails to engage the individual in affective interaction of the intensity that can be seen in the group.

Containment of Anxiety in a Group Setting

Ettin observed the group's holding function, referring to 'its ability to accommodate its membership in a chrysalis of protection, security and transformation'. (1992: 308) He remarked that group could be regarded as a container for those elements of the human experience that needed proper management and guidance. One of the volcanic substances that needs to be contained in this therapeutic vessel is, of course, anxiety, an exceedingly painful experience that comes when individuals move through the finite and free themselves to actualize the infinite possibilities in their personalities.

It seems that the flood of anxiety that individuals experience when they open themselves up to a possibility of change can often be less overwhelming in the group conditions, than when it is experienced in isolation or in a dyad situation. Collective support, provided the group has achieved cohesiveness, a sense of 'togetherness', seems to be more powerful than the analyst's support which is offered 'in quality and quantity that *he* believes to be relevant and required' (Wolf et al., 1993: 83) and is not so spontaneous or impulsive.

Resolving Dependence on Authority in Group Therapy

Kierkegaard assailed the established authority that denied ordinary people the authority of their own adulthood by infantilizing them and keeping them in prolonged childhood. Foulkes (1964), too, was very much aware of people's tendency to seek security in the authority of a powerful figure, which is reflected in the regularity with which group members tend to make the group therapist into 'an omnipotent father-leader figure'. He describes the task of the group leader as follows:

> Firstly, he must be in a position to give the group the security and immunity emanating from his authority as a leader. . .. Secondly, he must accept this position as a leader in order to be able to liquidate it later on. (1964: 61)

What some call transference resolution, or bringing the therapist down from his pedestal, Foulkes describes as weaning the group from 'the infantile need for authoritative guidance'. Kierkegaard would probably describe this move towards the truth as destroying the illusion about the superhuman powers of the leader. But while for Foulkes (1964) the group replaces the leader's authority with that of the group, Kierkegaard (1849) recognizes only one authority in the presence of which man achieves transparency of his self – God.

Foulkes admitted that 'the final solution of this dependence in individual therapy . . . is a difficult problem' and that 'in group treatment the step towards society and the community during and after successful treatment is a much more natural one' (Foulkes, 1964: 180). Dyadic treatment tends to insulate and isolate the individual in symbiosis which may lead to the development of pathological dependency of such depth and intensity that it may turn out to be difficult or impossible to resolve it. The clinging to the therapist is, however, less likely to develop to such a dangerous level in a multi-personal situation, where there is more vigorous interaction in the group between the members, and between members and the leader. The therapist's greater spontaneity in his responses to members of the group and his more frequent self-disclosure facilitates giving up the phantasy about the leader's superhuman qualities and the expectation of getting magical help from the authority.

The Role of Group Therapy in Raising Awareness of Existential Issues

Group therapy often raises awareness of the vital existential issues more effectively than individual therapy. The feeling of being isolated and abandoned for example, is usually more readily experienced in the group where the illusion of exclusive possession of the therapist, so characteristic for the dyadic setting, can no longer be fostered.

Participation in group therapy also sharpens individuals' awareness of their responsibility for what they have made of themselves, for their present actions and for their future. In a multi-personal setting individuals discover, for example, that their communications, verbal or non-verbal, elicit a variety of reactions from other group members. As they become aware of the consequences of their

expressions in the group individuals gradually gain an insight into their own responsibility for the difficulties which have brought them to therapy. In individual therapy the therapist's posture of neutrality, in the atmosphere of greater leniency and permissiveness, can deprive clients of awareness of their impact on other persons and thus creates the illusion of non-accountability for their actions, thoughts and feelings towards others. Foulkes's emphasis on the individual's relational context is in opposition to the view held by many that 'the mind is a matter for the individual', which he sees as being tantamount to saying 'each for himself, I am not to blame for what happens to the other person, whether he is obviously near to me, or whether I am involved in concealed ways, or even quite unconsciously' (Foulkes, 1990: 225). Such an attitude of detachment from one's sense of personal responsibility is reminiscent of the aesthetic mode of existence so clearly defined and skilfully described by Kierkegaard. The aesthete regards himself as having only limited responsibility for the manner of his own life which he sees as being determined by certain external conditions that are not within his control.

A group experience can also make it easier for members to exercise their freedom by inching themselves up to a dreaded change gradually, provided, of course, that it happens in a climate of increasing understanding and tolerance that results from honest and more spontaneous communications between members than those that occur in a dyad. Members of the group often experience a greater sense of security and interact more freely as a result of feelings of parity that are never available in dyadic treatment, with its power-invested one-to-one climate. In a group setting the individual, then, is more likely 'to look inward, backward, and interactively in order to be able to move forward more freely in a wondrous expansion of understanding' (Wolf et al., 1993: 98).

Summary

A preliminary consideration of the main themes in the philosophies of Foulkes and Kierkegaard seemed to be propelling us in the direction of some irreconcilable differences between them. To be fair, both start from the position of insight into man's basic condition of guilt, that is, his failure to be totally honest about himself, and with both, there is a decisive drive toward truth and transparency. When it comes, however, to the issue of helping

individuals to overcome their isolation from their real selves, Kierkegaard's and Foulkes's paths seem to diverge temporarily. Kierkegaard, in leaping toward transcendence, holds that the ideal solution lies in man's personal encounter with God, which could easily be conceived as decision for utter negation of communal ties. This would be understandable in the light of Kierkegaard's belief that uncritical acceptance of the 'universal' fostered illusions and defences that obstructed self-knowledge and self-understanding.

Foulkes, in turn, recognized the absurdity of removing individuals from the world of their fellow beings and ignoring the context of their social relations, in which, as he claimed, their problems originated. He believed that a therapeutic group, as a representative of the community, created the optimal conditions in which the individual's earlier conflicts could be re-created, observed, examined and resolved. Foulkes insists that 'only in a group situation can one do full justice to each individual', and then adds that:

> The individual out of a group, in isolation, is almost like . . . a Japanese flower before it is in water. Only in the group situation can he spread himself out, show himself as what he is, what his symptoms mean; what he can do and what one can do for him. (Foulkes, 1964: 100)

However, it must not be forgotten that not everybody will be able to benefit from a group experience and for some individuals, in certain situations, it may even turn out to be harmful. As Whitaker (1995) points out 'in a group one has less control over what comes at a person as stimuli' and danger arises when the individual is confronted with more than he can cope with. 'A member may awkwardly offer some insight . . . that may be too hurtful to the invidimual who may not be able to cope with the anxiety provoked by the confrontation' (Wolf et al., 1993: 99). This may lead to disappointment and premature withdrawal from the group. The power of group therapy may be limited with personality disorders having deep unconscious roots. Foulkes, for example, pointed out that 'paranoia or strong paranoid features are certainly not favourable and caution must be exercised' (1964: 35).

My investigation of Kierkegaard's and Foulkes's shared view that man should commit himself to a process of self-disclosure and introspection leads me to believe that both were committed to helping individuals to develop their capacity not only to understand

and love themselves in the right way, but also to love 'the neighbour' in the right way, that is, to relate to everyone from that area in themselves that has adopted the values of truth, love and justice.

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