

The Large Group and its Conductor

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In the literature on the large group there are two omissions which need to be confronted: one is theoretical, the other empirical. Too little has been written about the role and style of the large group conductor and we have scant clinical material derived from the large group setting. The "blank pages" are no accident, they have a dynamic meaning within the social foundation matrix of the group analytic movement.(1) The omissions mirror Foulkes's ambivalence towards the large group and are reflected in the different approaches adopted by the group analytic heirs of the large group which pay more homage to Bion than to Foulkes. The intention of the paper is to show that there is a third position which assumes a dialectical relationship between destructive and creative forces in the large group and which returns to Foulkes's ideas on the conductor role.

I

The heirs of Foulkes

Kreeger believes that the large group space always resembles a psychotic mind and perceives the conductor as St. George and the large group as the dragon.(2) His practice as a conductor is very containing at the beginning and the end of each large group. In the middle phase of a group his stance is classical and abstinent. Kreeger thinks like a Kleinian in that he is pessimistic about the therapeutic and rational outcomes of large group work. The best we can hope for, he implies, is an insight into the experience of a disturbed mind and momentary reflections in the depressive position - if you like thoughts in defence against fragmentation but no thinking.

De Mare urges us to use large groups to encourage thinking and dialogue between differing sub-groups who can through their exchanges prevent warlike scenarios and enhance a civilising process.(3) He claims that the large group frustrates the satisfaction of libidinal needs and thereby causes hate. This resentment finds a channel for expression in sub-groups which are containing enough to hold the hate and turn it into the desire to think and to speak. Through a face to face dialogue between the sub-groups within a large group hate is transformed into frustration, which in turn is the pre-condition for using thoughts to develop thinking and linking. This theory is very much based on Bion's theory of thinking and learning from experience.(4)

Shaked is loyal to Freud and defines groups as versions of a mass.(5) In the large group members re-experience the archaic mother who threatens to 'incorporate' its children and consequently they regress into a dyadic relationship to both the group and the conductor. In recognition of Freud, Shaked argues that the individual member of a large group projects the ego on to an idealised group or leader construct. Both leader and group are alternately idealised and denigrated and group members relate to each other and the outside world as part-objects with a propensity to split and blame. He goes on to argue that a large group rarely 'progresses' out of the basic assumption positions outlined by Bion and is resistant to becoming a work group. It follows that large groups always remain leader fixated and that the 'classical posture' of the analyst provokes this form of dramatisation even more. To Shaked the conductor always remains the central focus and counter-point of the group, he is the father who gets grudgingly accepted but must always be fought. In this sense the large group provides empirical proof of the Freudian thesis that a society needs leadership and a shared ideology which binds people together and acts as a boundary to the outside world. This argument is reminiscent of Nitsun's anti-group only that here it is already located in the mind of its conductor. Ideally, Shaked argues, that the large group conductor works to help the group separate from omnipotent phantasies, magical solutions and idealisations. The aim of the large group is similar to that of democracy: the integration of death and separation into the social system.

Within the Freudian mass-psychology paradigm Shaked ends up arguing that the large group conductor must always retain the classical stance of an individual analyst, he sits in the group 'as if' he is behind the couch and as if the group is one, merged individual. This classical posture transferred from the individual to the large group setting produces very primitive forms of acting out and complex dramatisations in need of translation. Those who attended the Heidelberg symposium will know that this approach produces significant results and can work the victim-perpetrator theme through in a lasting way. It was also clear in Heidelberg that the large group never stopped being pre-occupied with its dependence on the leader and the group as a providing and depriving mother and father. As the conductor assumed that the group had one phantasised mind, group as a whole interpretations pre-dominated and a re-negotiation of individuality and interdependence within the group seemed almost impossible.

Although the style, courage and aim of Shaked's large group work deserve admiration, the dyadic paradigm

which he thinks in has a pre-Foulksian ring to it. Foulkes's communication theory overcame the limitations of the original Freudian model of reducing psychological interactions to a one to one scene. By adopting a matrix model of the mind Foulkes implied that each member is a nodal point in a transpersonal network and that each contribution in a group is connected with psychic problems which are located at the individual, sub-group and group-as-a-whole level. It follows that the conductor is freed up to intervene on all these levels and ensures that the communication-flow takes a horizontal, a vertical and external direction. The conductor in this view needs to free himself from being the master of the group and become its servant and co-facilitator. This conducting style brings more trust into the group and to the task of conducting. This more accepting and containing posture in the large group conductor creates a transitional space in which destructive and creative, healthy and pathological forces begin to interact and form an interdependent 'figuration' against the ground of the group as an 'as if world' representing society and Foulkes's foundation matrix.

Social anthropologists show that a tribal crowd or group needs rituals and leaders to structure the transition from one social and cultural time and space period to another; so does a large group during the development of a single session or over a number of days. The group analysts leading such a group must therefore pay attention to being a master of ceremonies as well as occupying the role of analyst. Kreeger doesn't pay enough attention to the conductor as a transitional object and de Mare assumes, in a structuralist fashion, that there is a 'natural' tendency to move from hate to dialogue through structural transpositions. Shaked takes up an orthodox Freudian stance and enters a dyadic relationship with the large group. The central focus of this relationship is the transference and counter-transference with the conductor. The other levels of the group, as it is conceptualised in Foulkes's theory of communication and location, are blocked out of the field of vision. Here it is argued that we need to go beyond Freud's idea that mass-psychology can be reduced to a two person psychology and take Foulkes's ideas about the group and its conductor working on various levels of the group seriously.(6) This implies that a conductor intervenes on the group as a whole, the sub-group, the individual and the social foundation matrix levels simultaneously. Having been so specific it is nevertheless absurd to give clear instructions or write a hand-book on how to do be a large group conductor. What is presented here is one person's attempt at arriving at a sharable definition of what it means to conduct such a group in line with group analytic principles.

The restoration of Foulkes to large groups

Although Foulkes said that the large group could be approached in a group analytic way he wrote just one article on the subject which leaves us none the wiser about a Foulksian way of conducting such groups. We have to turn Nitsun's argument about the anti - and pro - group tradition on its head.(7) If Foulkes's pro - group perspective has been too dominant in our thinking about the small group, the anti - group perspective of Bion has been too influential in relation to the large group. Nitsun says that we need to unearth the destructive side of groups to reach a more integrated view of small group phenomena. It is clear that group analysts have neglected the creative potential of large groups, abandoning the task of understanding the dynamics of such groups to the Kleinians. Bion's work on basic assumptions, thought formation and learning from experience provides the best framework for understanding the regressive and progressive pulls in a large group. But the orthodox conducting style associated with this Neo-Freudian paradigm and its emphasis on abstinence and group as a whole interventions needs to be replaced with a flexible, containing and 'civilising' conducting style which is in line with Foulkes's ideas on the role of the group conductor.

Perhaps Foulkes's refusal to engage with the large group is related to the fact that he developed a positive view of small groups even though he experienced the massification of the mob and its submission to a psychotic leader in the Third Reich. Foulkes had to emigrate due to the threat posed by a large group that had lost its mind. The impact of this experience becomes visible when one reads all the references in Foulkes relating to the term conductor. His thinking in relation to the role aims to avoid talk about the leader or the power such a person can gain over a dependent group. Nitsun shows in his book *The Anti - Group* that Foulkes restricted himself to thinking how he, as a conductor, could harness the benevolent forces in the service of the group. The large group confronts group analysts with the problem of having to look with both eyes and face and "master" the whole of human nature - not just the creative but also the destructive and psychotic forces which are unleashed in the context of the extreme social setting of the large group.

The one person who wrote empirically about the dynamic development of a large group and the behaviour of the conductor was Robin Skynner (8). In an analysis of a large group at the Maudsley hospital in London he showed that the group analyst must abandon the classical,

abstinent stance and treat the large group like a small group with deprived and severely disturbed patients. In both situations the conductor must retain classical analytic thinking but adopt a more interactive posture. Disturbed patients re-experience deprivation in the face of an abstinent analyst. By becoming more active and involved the conductor can help a large group avoid a complete re-enactment of a "basic fault scenario" and strengthen those members sufficiently who are 'grown up enough' on entry to enter a therapeutic alliance with the conductor and the imagined group to weave a matrix which can hold the more disturbed members sufficiently to allow for the development of a dialectical interdependence and interaction between regressing and progressing members and sub-groups.(9)

The second idea for a group analytic stance in large groups can be derived from Thomas Ogden's recent thinking on the relationship between analysand and analyst in individual analysis.(10) He has pointed out that the analyst makes verbal interpretations which are rooted in classical conceptions but that the most important exchanges between analyst and analysand are acted out on a non-verbal level. Hence we should conceptualise the interaction between analyst and analysand in terms of a matrix and understand that the analyst makes "interventions through actions" which are as important as words to the patient. If the patient engages in "ego-training-in-action" within the matrix of the analytic setting then the same applies to the conductor. The difference being that the conductor reflects on the experience of this process and translates the resonance phenomena. His verbal interpretations are merely a recognition of a change which has already been acted out in the triangle between analyst, group member and group.(11)

Another building block for a group - analytic conducting style in the large group setting is provided by Kohut and Winnicott. Winnicott argued that the analyst should attempt to create an "environmental mother" in the clinical setting so that the patient can re-experience the kind of interaction between mother and child which leads to the development of a true rather than a false self.(12) Concretely this means that the analyst in the large group must not just be visible as a role stereotype but become graspable as a whole person. Although this might be true of all settings, the conductor needs to connect his sense of how to be with an awareness of what happens in different group settings. It might be useful to argue that individual therapy is about learning to feed and to vomit, the small group about experiencing giving and taking and the large group about learning to be a human being with a social nature who wants to work

through the unconscious dimensions of the civilising - and de-civilising process.(13)

Kohut demanded that the analyst needs to re-think what he does during a session by accepting that in phase one of any analysis the patient will communicate through action rather than words.(14) This means that work with the patient can only take the form of creating an ambience in the clinical setting which resembles the world of early mothering. Only when the patient has found a good enough self - object can dynamic interchanges develop which do not end in a narcissistic injury but in attachment to a self-object matrix which allows the patient to be a social being who can tolerate dependency and reflect on it verbally in a relationship - be it with the analyst, a fellow patient or the group. Both the Winnicottian and Kohutian agenda point to the analyst having to be and modelling an ideal-type human being who is comfortable with being insignificant in the face of enormous social forces but engages with the task of making a difference to a social organism which threatens to fall apart and needs help with growing up.

In the large group setting this means that the conductor becomes visible, graspable and identifiable in the analyst's role. Being a group analyst means maximising the opportunities for ego-training in action through verbal and non-verbal interventions. Modelling the analyst as environmental mother in this conscious way means that the conductor makes himself known to the group at the start and end of each session. Letting the group guess who the conductor is resembles acting out the mother who is more needy than the baby and overburdens the group with the development of a false self which functions to satisfy the conductor and protects him from holding the baby. The large group can be trusted to produce enough destructive and regressive forces without the conductor adding to their development by his actions or inaction's.

The Foulksian conductor in the large group

At the GAS Symposium on destruction and desire in Copenhagen (1996) the attempt was made to heed Foulkes's advice and base the conductor role on the three constituent parts : dynamic administration, translation and analysis. (15) The group analytic assumption was made that the large group is not just potentially mad but also healthy and that a basic trust in the group by the analyst is needed to facilitate any kind of communication and the construction of a matrix. The role of the analyst in the large group was rooted in current analytical thinking in Britain which views the relationship between

analyst and analysand as an interactive triangle which always results in the creation of a 'third subject'.(16) Transference events are not a re-enactment of the past but a scenic re-dramatisation of internalised experiences in the here and now of a group context. Although the interaction is characterised by transference and counter-transference relating to the family of origin, it can only be described with reference to the here and now because the pattern of interaction has *never been seen like this* before and has never been shaped by such a group. It is a unique act of re-creation between those caught up in the current group and its surrounding social matrix. We as group analysts can go further than Ogden, who first formulated these ideas, and say that the interaction between analyst and analysand is always shaped by the context of the group and the mind and culture of the group is formed by the dyadic and triadic alliances within it and the social foundation matrix surrounding it. The group, the analyst and analysand form an interdependent Gestalt, analytical insight needs to be combined with *scenic understanding* and *narrative instead of paradigmatic thinking*.(17)(18) On this ground, the analyst's verbal interventions in a large group become 'figurations' which depend on the dramatisation of the unconscious conflict in the group and summarise a change which has already been accomplished interactively by the group, its constituent parts and the conductor.

The dynamic administrator role in Copenhagen involved the selection of the setting and the planning of the movement of people to the group room. The conductor made sound and sight tests to establish where it would be ideal for him to sit so that he could see and hear and be recognised and understood. This practical work is part of working in a group analytic way with the group and the time spent with the committee, its chair and the manager of the sports hall symbolised one of the most important group analytic interventions of the whole week. This became clear when the workers who build the amphitheatre in which the large group met had taken the structure almost completely down on the morning before the last group session. If it hadn't been for the sports hall manager the group would have turned up for an empty space. It was the manager's understanding of what we were trying to do and his social conscience which made him intervene and insist on having the amphitheatre rebuild in time for the session. Without this intervention all the analytic work by the group and the conductor would have lost its meaning.

In the translator role the group analyst assumes that the therapeutic process is the same as the process of communication. For Foulkes this meant that people

exchange information on four levels, that the problem of dis - jointed communication, so typical of large groups, is not located in any one person but between people and that the conductor must translate attempts at communication from the more autistic and unconscious to the more verbal and conscious level. Discharging the translator role means to locate symptoms in the matrix and to perceive them as expressions of un - relatedness and dis - ease. It also means that the conductor needs to be humble and realise that no metaphoric expression or scenic dramatisation of a psychic conflict can ever be translated accurately. Like a translator of poetry the analyst can only convey the approximate meaning of what the speaker meant to communicate. Any ideas that the conductor's interventions are truer or more accurate than anyone else's in the group can not be sustained.

'Participant Observation' in a very large group

Let me now come to my second theme which is the description and analysis of five actual group sessions at the Copenhagen symposium from the conductor's point of view. By definition the reader will be given snapshots of a participant observer who, like a social anthropologist, was following a dual purpose: first, to learn about the mentality of a strange culture in order to record it and make it comprehensible to others; second, to find more of his true self through familiarisation with the stranger, the other. Detachment in the conductor - cum - writer role is impossible. What is reported contains unconscious distortions and reflects the fact that this account would have to be of Proustian proportions to portray the true complexity of the events which took place in the group and the mind and body of the conductor.

Large group conducting is not really possible without accepting the fact that the experience of the group cannot be grasped in words. An experienced large group conductor knows that some non - analytic knowledge of life and science is needed to discharge the role in such a way that the group's mind and its foundation matrix can be connected. The conductor of a large group is in a comparable relationship to his object of observation as a modern physicist. What we can hope to find are observable 'traces' of enactment's and what can 'hold the senses' of a large group conductor together, in the face of a bewildering array of projections and exchanges, is something akin to the philosophy of science developed by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg.(19)

These physicists argued that observations and conclusions must be placed in a triangle in order to attain an approximation of the likely truth of an event. They did not believe that the objective observer role is possible

as whoever observes is involved in distorting and shaping the event that follows. They believed in the principles of *indeterminacy* and *complementarity*. The first idea suggests, in Goethe's phrase, that we see what we know and that it depends on the specialism of the scientist whether he sees waves or corpuscles; the second principle suggests that it is better to match the eyes of one onlooker with those of another in order to get what one anthropologist has described as a *dense description* which he defined as the task of a social scientist(20). The conductor needs therefore to try and intervene dialogically, leaving a space for feed-back and giving the group the power to decide whether an interpretation fits or not. Applied to the the task of large group analysis this also means that the conductor needs to weave into his interpretations references to history, culture and philosophy and arrive at a 'metaphoric story line' which is a distortion because it has been artificially structured but is at the same time shareable and thereby verifiable. It is perhaps even more true in the large group that group analysis aims at ego - training in action without knowledge of outcomes and that a neutral and abstinent posture by the analyst resembles the omnipotent fantasies of pre-Einsteinian scientists in search of the detached, objective observer role. It is time to mourn the loss of such illusions of grandeur.

Group 1

The group required a biblical exodus from the cultured and safe environment of the university into the wilderness of an unknown sports hall. The journey was short on reality and long on anxiety. People entered the hall, sat in their seats and generated a chorus of noise which denied the existence of time and killed off the voice of the conductor. An anonymous group member got the group to fall silent by clapping her hands. The gesture clarified that we were inhabiting a paranoid - schizoid universe. The group was immediately placed in the context of a bloody century and was compared to a melting pot, a market place, a dance floor and a battle field. The fear of disintegration began to face some of the participants who started to project their anxiety outward and developed the defence of absolute dependency. The square in the middle of the group became the focus of attention and several people found fault with the carpet as if they wanted a perfect relationship to the group as mother before they could risk speaking.

The search for a safe relationship invoked a fear of the absence of a belonging group. Survival in the here and now required the resurrection of familiar and recognisable themes. The history of the exodus from the

university to the group room was reinterpreted and the long line of people meandering from the Paenum Institute to the sports hall with the help of guides was mentally reshaped into a flock of sheep being led to the slaughter. Suddenly the wandering group analysts embodied a line of Jews who were willingly going into the gas chambers at Auschwitz. A helpful gesture was reinterpreted as the persecution of the group by an evil conductor or committee. But the blame position could not be held on to as some speakers got obsessed with their placid compliance and lack of resistance. The victim - perpetrator - bystander theme continued to dominate but could only be tolerated for short periods. At other times members of the group projected whatever thoughts came into their minds. The force by which these atomised thoughts were expelled and crushed without finding a connection confronted the group with the truth of Bion's claim that thoughts are developed as a defence against a fear of disintegration and that connections between thoughts and people can only be made when high levels of frustration can be tolerated.

The large group in Heidelberg at the last GAS symposium in 1993 was re-remembered and the theme of the Germans and the Jews re - introduced. At this point the conductor felt the need to say something and offered the following thoughts: "Socrates was a philosopher, Socrates was a Greek, all Greeks are philosophers. According to the group I am in charge of a slaughter house, I am a German, all Germans are butchers. How can this ever be a safe group ?" The group wondered whether my statement was true or metaphorical. Eventually someone said, "it is better to have been a butcher and become a group analyst than to have been a group analyst, like Karaditsch, and then turn into a butcher." The group had wanted to give itself cohesion through the ritual killing of the leader and his exposure as an inadequate mother. The attack symbolised both the oedipal killing of the father and the baby's attempt to bite the breast in order to find out whether it can be held and contained, whether it can show its bad and good self and still be accepted by the parent and the group.

The conductor's survival enabled the group to integrate the inheritance from Heidelberg and the Germans and Jews were not left alone with "their problem". It was pointed out that bystanders like the Swiss had lived in times where they ended up colluding with those that perpetrated the crime in order to stay safe themselves. An Israeli expressed the desire not to be used again for the purpose of hiding other people's guilt and repressed history. She wanted to know about the Scandinavian skeletons in the cupboard. The conductor then said that the group was trying to separate from Heidelberg and come to terms with

the fact that giving birth to something new in Copenhagen would involve the destruction of an idealised past.

The group then wanted to know how the Dane's had behaved during the war. Very quickly Denmark was upheld as a rare example of how one should behave in extreme situations. The conductor was thinking of Bettelheim, who argued that it was a person's nature and not his psychoanalytic training which decided whether someone survived or showed himself to be a decent human being in a context of terror.(21) Unsure of himself he decided to remain silent. The group ended with a Danish woman insisting that her nation could not simply be idealised, the Danes too had collaborators in their midst. In her the group had found the counter-location-point in its search for the ideal leader or perfect environmental group-mother.

Group 2

Very quickly the second group began to be pre-occupied with the function of the human senses and the difference between the position of being the observer and the object of observation, the analysand or the analyst. It seemed as if the group was resisting the adoption of the patient role. The Greek myth of the three women who have to share one eye was told. Someone revealed their distress about not knowing whether they could retain their sense of self, their sense of belonging or their awareness of being in possession of their own senses. The myth exploded the fact that a person can rely on being a separate individual in possession of a skin with a clear boundary between inside and outside, between my senses and your senses. In a frightening way the group lived the reality behind the claims of Foulkes and Elias that there is no such thing as a self-contained monad called the individual which stands in 'glorious' opposition to society.(22) Both argued that we only possess knowledge of who we are by owning the "wounding thought" that we have a social self that is inextricably made up of I, You and We elements. The myth of one eye and three separate people exposed how the tension between this I, you and We dimension of our mind is at dis - ease with itself and the surrounding cultural container. In short, "ego training in action" is not just a matter for a therapeutic group but is integral to everyday life in society.

The topic of killing, aggression and violence against people, animals and nature returned. The paradox of cutting up a patient in order to heal him, of using sadistic rituals to accomplish a mature task was developed by a person who said how he had supervised a heart surgeon and his team "with a death rate of one in three". The psychic pain got too much for the surgeon and

he decided to cope by refusing to do the pre-and post - operative interviews with the patient and relatives. He did the cutting, the others did the emotional backing. That was the only way the task could be faced and seen through. It taught him that splitting can have positive as well as negative functions. The large group had brought this experience back to mind as he could only survive in here by splitting a part of him self off and by projecting it into the group to be eaten, digested and transformed. Somehow the story fitted in with the group's search for a victim role in which everyone was safe from participation in violence and offence against the elders or "dreaded and unnamed" siblings.

The sense of the "unbearableness of being" was picked up by a woman who told of her daughter's plight at the hands of doctors who had to cut up parts of her body in order to save her life. The reaction to the woman was strong and split. Somebody thought that she had abused the group in the same way that the doctors had violated her daughter; others were moved by the depth of her pain and held her sufficiently to help her mourn enough to recover her wits before the session ended. It was clear that the disturbed state of the group itself had triggered this person's need to unburden her guilt and attempt to purge her own mind in such a public way. She hoped to get re-connected with ordinary humanity through acting out a public "funeral rite". She had no choice, she had to dramatise the elements of the Antigone drama and needed a public arena - complete with silent chorus - to free herself from the role of heroine. The timing of her outpouring made sense in that the group could use her to explore the split between those that wanted to show their desire and start the work of mourning and reparation and those that wanted to stay attached to the destructive object and persisted with dependency and attack. The woman had used the large group to destroy her shame and recovered her desire to belong, the group had contained and used the woman in order to restore its ability to make connections and develop civilising thoughts and rituals.

Group 3

The group first heard from someone whose suitcase had been lost by the airline and a person who claimed that his umbrella had been stolen during the last congress. He wagged his index finger at the group and wanted participants to be honest enough to return any object which he might lose this time or own up to being delinquent. He gave the group the message that desire cannot be met without loss. This introductory phase ended in the first real dialogue when someone claimed that the large group had taken her words away and another person

answered : "Perhaps your words weren't usurped; perhaps someone just tried to speak for you." This signified that the group's mind was no longer treating all words as bizarre objects which had to be kept "out - there" lest they should increase the psychotic insanity "in - here". A distinction was tolerated between me and not - me, between sense and non - sense. The door was now open for the question of meaning to enter the group arena.

This depressive plateau was used by someone to open up the topic of change, collusion, loss, guilt and reparation.(23) A young Russian woman stood up and accused parts of the congress of being prejudiced about her people. There was a habit of splitting all participants into perpetrators and victims. She had observed the Germans accept collective guilt all too easily but she was not going to comply. She was far too young to accept the blame for everything that was done in the name of the Soviet Union. She had come to learn, to be seen, to look and enter a dialogue about the tragedy that had befallen her country. There followed a series of tentative exchanges between this woman and participants from various parts of the ex - union. The whole drama of how difficult it is to make contact with the enemy, with the stranger, with the outsider was acted out.

It was a simple thought that broke the spell and made the boundary between insiders and outsiders translucent. A group member from Lithuania said: "I never thought it would be possible to find a context in which I could ask a Russian what it was like for them, did they also have to learn to go to a nuclear bunker as school children, were they also frightened, like us?" The vulnerability of the question lead to a level of openness which was required to reconnect in the here and now and destroy a slavish dependency on the past. It was interesting to observe that some people could not tolerate this moment of oneness with humanity and immediately launched into a "proselytising" attack on the group by reminding everyone that there was war and mass murder rather than dialogue in Ruanda. Fairburn's "internal saboteur" with a morbid interest in clinging to the bad object and a desire to destroy mature dialogue raised its head.(24) The "puritans" were used by the group to stop the dawn of false hope and helped the collective mind remember that destructive and creative forces co-exist in a dialectical tension at any moment in the group. The reinvocation of all the sinfulness in the world was experienced by the conductor as an intrusion into a secular group space that had momentarily witnessed the integration of the sacred and the profane.

Group 4

The oedipal scene got dramatised in this group through a preoccupation with reputation. The question was posed : what would the press see and write if they looked in on us? Would we be revealed as adults, as children or as mad? The idea that we could be sane and mature because we were meeting in this way was split off and denied. The theme of our own sanity and reputation could, as claimed by de Mare, only be faced in a dialogue through the channel of sub - groups. The large group process seems to show that humanity unites and that culture divides us. We learn to tolerate the frustration caused by the divisive nature of culture by idealising our own sub-culture and by denigrating the neighbouring one. For this mechanism to be successful cultures have the tendency to define the "we" as pure and the "them" as dirty. Contact becomes a matter of taboo and touching the boundary signifies an act of danger and pollution.(25) On this basis it makes a lot of sense if sub - groups in the large group repeatedly return to the theme of virginity and perversion. They want to avoid a mature stance which implies blood letting, the loss of innocence and pollution through contact with the stranger. In the large group the polluting neighbour sits next to you and you get a chance to discover that a translucent boundary between the belonging and the enemy group is affirming of a common humanity and allows the desire to act out destructive fantasies to be contained by sitting face to face.

In this sense the answers to the question of the reputation of the group signified a readiness of the participants to engage in a genuine cultural exchange between distinct sub-groups whose difference could not be resolved but needed to be accepted and tolerated. One sub-group claimed that if someone were looking at the group they would see how we were avoiding mature intercourse by indulging in psychological masturbation. Another sub-group rallied around the idea that the group was full of old colonists who had been trying to fertilise virgin territory in the east and were now segregating into those that wanted to settle down as farmers by fencing off their own land and those who were addicted to the missionary role. A third sub - group challenged the idea of overpowering fathers and innocent virgins by pointing out that in the group analytic movement young man like the conductor had been missionised and trained by strong older women. The fourth image dealing with the reputation of the group focused on the idea that we were struggling with making sense of the changes in the psychoanalytic landscape. Psychoanalysis used to shock because of its emphasis on sexuality, it now is challenging because it demands time and depth in an age of global, Disneylike and fast changes.

A person from a continent not involved in the east west split brought the idea into the group that the concern for virginity and a good reputation was linked with the collapse of the old order and the sharing of the cold war inheritance. "The west has lost its sense of unity, the east has made the word comrade unusable. So how can we find fellowship in the large group if we have no words for talking about it. So, we fall back on sexualising the dialogue when in reality we seek companionship. Perhaps that is the dirty picture we don't want to look at. Companionship might remind us of homosexual bonding and attraction." The group ended with a dream. A woman reported that she had seen two older men who took children into a class room. She was one of the children and when they had all settled down she saw that they and the two teachers were naked. Before she woke up she realised that one of the men stood facing the class and the other had turned around, bent down and showed his bare bottom to the children." The group felt that one of the older men was her training analyst and that the man facing the children was the conductor. He was feared as having the power to strip everyone naked but sat more exposed before us than anyone. The woman confirmed that this fitted with the dream but that she could not make sense of the taste of disgust with which she woke up. At this point the conductor said that it is perhaps a degree of self - disgust which she was tasting for the group. She had discovered in her dream that the children have the power to destroy their parents reputations and leave them exposed, defenceless and vulnerable. The dream had shattered the fantasy that the group is made up of innocent victims."

Group 5

In terms of the foundation matrix of post-war Europe it was not unimportant that the conductor was a German and that the only contribution during the symposium which had a populist appeal and earned open applause was made by a woman with the same national identity who was used by the group to draw up a balance sheet of its achievements. She said that the search for innocence seems to have been a defence against the threat contained in the theme of destruction and desire. She pointed out that " the virgin is like all other ideals an illusion. In the group there had been a search for virgin territory, a passion for missionary activities and a desire for power. These were all male fantasies. But we also had some female fantasies which dealt with having a bad press, being introverted, being shamed. The virgin is not a female preoccupation, it is time to acknowledge the strong women, the powerful older generation and feminine themes in the group analytic movement."

When several speakers linked these thoughts to the Danish woman in charge of the symposium it became clear that the group wanted to avoid having to deal with their dependency on the conductor by relocating the problem of their attachment in a victim - perpetrator dynamic. Instead of facing the pain of ending a good enough symposium, which had succeeded in giving the "German" within and without a place inside the group analytic movement, the person from the "fatherland" fell back on a split between good mothers and bad fathers. She invoked the IIInd generation tragedy of having to define the self with reference to a "higher super-ego ideal". She implied that she was someone special who stood out from the crowd by virtue of being a strong victim. She fell back on an identity seeking device employed by second generation children when they 'compulsively steal themselves' into the victim position to avoid having to identify with their 'murderous fathers' and 'colluding mothers'. Thereby those burdened with the collective guilt of the previous generation hope to ensure acceptance in the eyes of those whose rejection they fear most. By obsessively looking for external approval, they develop a self with a harsh internal super-ego and end up hating themselves, just like they restricted themselves to hating their parents and denied their love for them. The secret desire to be free of the collective guilt becomes a self-destructive defence mechanism that ensures that the attachment to the transferred guilt is strengthened and an unconscious identification with the real parents within re-formed.

The woman's critical balance sheet in the large group implied that for the children of the victims and perpetrators the good enough German is female, the good enough German as a father, as a large group conductor must remain unthinkable to retain the dyadic victim - perpetrator scenario as a self-object matrix. It was an ironic counter-point during the last session to the expert on second generation problems from Israel who had shown the group during the first session how they often 'used the Germans and the Jews' as an excuse for avoiding a confrontation with their own 'destructive' past. The guilt that had accumulated in these five group sessions was connected with the desire of the younger generation to push the older one from the perceived seat of power. An attempt had been made in session three but the group had pulled back from 'parenticide' when it realised that this would lead to dangerous form of sibling rivalry. Indirectly, the return to the victim-perpetrator theme was an attempt to mourn the loss of collective and grandios self-objects which the younger and older generation had projected into the debate about relative positions of power within the Group Analytic Movement.

When faced with ending and separation the large group descends into a split universe between insiders and outsiders. The reason is perhaps that the large group does not end and mourn, it treats the conductor and the projected group ideal like a transitional object which is relinquished, not lost. The dis - ease with the past and about the end of the group was not worked through and towards the end took on a local flavour. Those who are familiar with Scandinavian history will know that relations between Danes and Norwegians are not easy. Against this background the contribution by two Norwegians made a deeper trans - generational sense. They reported that they had been disturbed by the acting out of the Danish organising committee at the party, which took place the evening before the last session. The two people argued that it was not right that responsible committee members had submitted to a "white kiss" ritual. Some of those addressed owned up to having enjoyed participating in a Danish peer group prank at the party as a way of affirming their separate identity in front of a 'foreign' audience. They admitted -gleefully to their rivals, the Norwegians - that it might have been inappropriate to act out in this way but that the event might symbolise something for the whole symposium and the large group. Other group members developed the analysis by saying that desire was not only coupled with destruction but also with self-destruction and equally importantly that personal development was tied up with play and boundary testing. The collusion of the committee with a prank was making the self-destructive and playful side of everyone visible. The acting out of the 'responsibel people' had shown that the struggle to hold on to an integrated self is never ending, that power can mean that those who hold it will discharge their duty honourably but we also know that power awakens the desire to destroy the boundaries and engage in abusive behaviour. "The group would end", someone said, "but it will also have to live on. We will always be tempted by repetition compulsion as long as we live. In life and in this group we will leave a psychological inheritance, some of our projections will be transferred into the large group at the next symposium and the generation there will have to deal with it."

It made a kind of sense that someone brought a split and psychotic dream into the group after these 'persecutory' contributions had berated the whole group and exposed the Danish host sub-culture within it as vulnerable. At the point of facing the separation from the group, the conductor and the symposium an Australian man who felt the displaced aggression in the group said that he would go away from the large group feeling that it can never be trusted. The sessions had disturbed him, he had been

dreaming violently throughout the week and hadn't dared to reveal these private images before. Now at the end he felt safe enough to talk about the dreams as he thought they were the property of the large group and did not belong to his own mind. He dreamt that he was the helper of a gang of criminals who were selling corpses. When they had run out of dead heroin addicts to sell they started killing ordinary people to stay in business. Eventually it got more and more difficult to find victims and the gang decided to kill him. Having helped the gang he thought this was very unfair and he asked why they picked on him. The answer was that he had been chosen because he had been a helper. At this point he woke up and was bathed in cold sweat.

The telling of the dream coincided with a time when the conductor had been excluded from the conscious mind of the group and felt killed off inside. He used a short silence in response to the dream to make a final interpretation which contained material which had been held since the first session: "When I try to review the group in my mind I am left with an image of adolescent desire. This large group wanted to be hedonistic without becoming responsible, desiring but not destructive. I am also left with the image of the doctor - patient relationship. Why, I don't know but it is as if this group struggled to get in touch with the split off neediness and aggression in the analyst and wanted unconsciously to avoid the experience of being the helpless patient by 'monitoring' and 'auditing' the conductors failings. Perhaps the dream allowed me to finally get aggressive enough to impose an interpretation on the group and the dream allowed the group, as a collective body of analysts to integrate the sadistic and destructive part of their professional role and accept that a loss of innocence is an integral part of the therapeutic process. Looking back, it certainly was part of the experience of being the large group conductor in Copenhagen that destruction and desire had to be integrated within to model a containing and holding posture without."

Before leaving a large group it is important to re-assert the difference between self and other. In Copenhagen this meant re-asserting the identity of the belonging group. The difference between me and you got worked out by looking at the divide between us and them - Danes and Norwegians, collaborators and resisters, man and women, old and young. The common ground between the departing German and Norwegian critics during this session was that they dealt with the issue of individuation and separation. Unconsciously they were asking the group to affirm that they had internalised an experience which could be held onto and help face reality after the

symposium. The connected foundation matrix issue which the explorations of identity, separateness and the power of each peer group within the large group signified was the fact that these exchanges mirrored the post - modern "sibling society" where fathers no longer play a role in the exchanges between a child and an all powerful mother and where the only safe place for the individual is to be found in a sisterhood or brotherhood - preferably with a victim status.(26)

The Copenhagen large group too consisted of peer groups which preferred to criticise and find fault, who experienced separation and moving on as a betrayal of their own group ideal. In this way categories were kept clean and the 'siblings' could be seen as equal, fair and 'virginal'. Siblings don't need to be rescued by a parental couple, as represented by the committee chair and the conductor. They remained independent and politically correct by opting for the side of the innocent victim and they tried to avoid offence and a counter-attack from people but especially the threatened environment and endangered animals. In this way the sub-groups avoided rivalry and mourning and maintained the fantasy of eternal youth and perfect being. Like true siblings the Copenhagen sub-groups avoided overly 'intimate contact' and remained in a narcissistic universe which is attuned to how the world should be and not how it is.(27) The large group revealed its Janus face at the end: one side faced reality, asserted its autonomy and made some progress in the civilising process of the Group Analytic Movement; the other side, fled into a fantasised innocence and eternal youth and refused to engage with the process of disillusionment involved in meeting the demands of the group rather than the individual within it.

Conclusion

The split between Bion and Foulkes is mirrored in the way a large group conductor is conceptualised. The two styles of conducting become graspable through the way a conductor handles beginnings, endings and transitions. The Foulksian pro - group conductor influences the quality of the experience in the large group by the way he makes him - self available during the session and by making it known that he exists at the start. The conductor belonging to the Bionic anti-group tradition gives the large group as much space as possible to regress by refraining from saying anything at the start or the end of the group. These opposing stances are in the end a false choice. The competent conductor of a large group needs to hold both perspectives in mind and

uses Bion to understand the defences of the group and Foulkes to develop a flexible way of conducting it. If we think of large group conducting in dialectical terms : Foulkes is the thesis, Bion is the anti-thesis and the conducting style in Copenhagen the "Aufhebung" of both in a third - and integrated position - which is analytical, philosophical and humane. Concretely, this means that the group analyst tries to intervene on all levels of the group, addresses the thinking mind in the group, guards the boundary and lets his actions be guided by a sense of how much regression the most vulnerable member of the group can tolerate. If these ethical and professional standards imply that some participants who have a preference for the madness of the large group and like to see their conductor push its members to the limits of sanity get their sadistic lust for blood sports frustrated then so be it.

It is clear that Foulkes's lessons are mostly heeded in the small group world and here it has been shown that his ideas have been under - utilised for the large group. Foulkes claimed that the group conductor has to develop three roles in the service of the group: he has to be the dynamic administrator, the analyst and the translator. Through training, supervision and learning from experience the conductor eventually integrates these roles and develops a clearly identifiable group analytic self which the members of any group can use, abuse, cathect and de-cathect as an object. What holds the conductor's personality together is his humanity and more important than his technical tools are his integrity, honesty and directness. The boundary between the analytical role, the responsible citizen and the human being has to be translucent in the large group. In this setting, the conductor needs to avoid getting sucked into simplistic 'either - or' scripts and repeatedly confront these reductionist desires with more 'civilising' and non-splitting 'as well as' interventions.

The Copenhagen large group demonstrated over five days how threatening this 'dialectical' way of seeing can be for "traditionally" minded group analysts. The profession is, in part, subject to helper syndrome which means that the help giving group analyst denies his own needs and desires by giving to others through his interpretations which establish a questionable link between symptom and cause. Desire turns into destruction through self-sacrifice and the analyst satisfies his own secret desires through projective identification by idealising patients as a helpless victims in need of rescue. Group and individual analysts tend to denigrate their own desires as "neurotic" symptoms of their not yet "perfect" helper nature. The large group at the symposium was overly pre-occupied with the theme of the virgin and

revealed that group analysts en masse are "addicted" to the temptation to perceive the world in victim - perpetrator terms. This powerful archetype functions to protect the professionals from the "recognition" that an interactive conception of the analyst - analysand relationship against the back - ground of a group means that everyone involved will become guilty through the act of participation. Mistakes are what life is made of, mistakes, especially those of the conductor, are the source for new knowledge in group analysis and facilitate individual and group development in all settings.

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