

Foulkes' Concept of the Matrix

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Introduction

A recurrent theme in Foulkes' work is his concept of the matrix, a concept easily reified and hard to grasp. It is, at first thought, natural to consider this idea to be one of the bricks from which group analytic theory is built (Pirsig 1977). Closer acquaintance with the matrix, however, shows this to be far from the truth. The idea is no way brick-like or clearly bounded. The matrix is in a sense the mould in which each brick is cast; it provides a background to the other bricks and is everything in the universe which is not the bricks.

The writing of this paper may imply a concentrated and focused topic; this is not so as each aspect of the matrix concept leads into other areas of discovery and exploration, and thinking about it leads rather directly to a world of associations and fluidity of the type found in a good group.

Definitions and Usage of the Word Matrix

The word matrix is derived from Latin in which it meant first and foremost a pregnant animal or female animal. In later Latin it came to mean womb. We can note here that the matrix was a place in which formation occurred but find a further meaning of roll or register (Cortesae 1967). This additional meaning clearly includes the idea of something which unrolls or unfolds (cf Bohm 1980 below).

In English matrix has had a bewildering variety of meanings with a central theme running through the usage of the word. The following are the meanings found in the Oxford English Dictionary (1971): (numbers (8) and (9) are from other sources):

- (1) Uterus or womb — occasionally ovary.
- (2) A place or medium in which something is bred, produced or developed.
(a) a growing point; (b) Formative part of an animal organ: such as the nail bed. (c) The body on which a fungus or lichen grows. (d) The inward pithy part of any tree or plant.
- (3) An embedding or enclosing mass, especially the rock mass surrounding or

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adhering to things embedded in the earth, as metals, fossils, gems and the like.

- (4) The substance situated between animal and vegetable cells.
- (5) A mould in which something is cast or shaped.
- (6) *Dentistry* — A plate of metal serving as a temporary wall for a cavity during filling.
- (7) *Mathematics* — A rectangular arrangement of quantities and symbols.
- (8) After Porteus and Wood-Jones (1929) The Brain or Central nervous system as the "Matrix of the Mind".
- (9) *S Matrix Theory* — An alternative mathematical approach to the formalising of the interactions of elementary particles.

It is possible to abstract from this a clearer view of the sort of thing a matrix is and the properties it might have. One group of abstractions is as follows. Matrices (1) are female and often maternal. (2) often comprise a background or interstitial substance. (3) they are the womb or mould in which structured things may be formed, contained or supported.

These definitions and uses of the word matrix begin to show already why Foulkes had a use for it in developing his thinking about groups. Already by a simple transformation of ideas it is possible to see the matrix of a group as mother to, as a formative place for and as a background to — the individual.

Foulkes' Presentation of the Idea of Matrix

Foulkes did not leave us with a clear and coherent presentation of the underlying theories or metapsychology from which group analysis was developed and which will sustain it as a scientifically identifiable treatment approach. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify in his writings a number of core concepts which appear repeatedly like Wagnerian leit-motifs. Each concept is developed differently with each appearance so that pursuing what Foulkes has to say about a particular idea through his works, enables the reader to develop for himself a growing awareness of a meaning of the concept.

The following section of this paper uses a series of quotations from Foulkes in an attempt to demonstrate such a synthetic approach. Foulkes (Foulkes and Anthony 1965) said

"The network of all individual mental processes, the psychological medium in which they meet, communicate and interact can be called the matrix. This is, of course, a construct in the same way as is, for example, the concept of traffic or, for that matter, of mind".

Another useful definition is as follows (Foulkes 1964):

"The matrix is the hypothetical web of communication and relationship in a given group. It is the common shared ground which ultimately

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determines the meaning and significance of all events and upon which all communications verbal and non-verbal rest".

He usefully extends this definition when he says:

"The social matrix can be thought of as a network in quite the same way as the brain is a network of fibres and cells which together form a complex unit. In this group network all processes take place and in it they can be defined with regard to their meaning, their extension in time and place and their intensity". (Foulkes and Anthony 1965).

Again and again the word network occurs so that it becomes almost synonymous with matrix, and Foulkes enlarges on this when he says:

"The group matrix is the operational basis of all relationships and communications. Inside this network the individual is conceived as a nodal point. The individual, in other words, is not conceived as a closed but as an open system. An analogy can be made with the neuron in anatomy and physiology, the neuron being the nodal point in the total network of the nervous system which always reacts and responds as a whole (Goldstein). As in the case of the neuron in the nervous system so is the individual suspended in the group matrix". (Foulkes 1964).

"Looked at in this way" (he continues), "It becomes easier to understand our claims that the group associates, responds and reacts as a whole. The group as it were avails itself now of one speaker, now of another but it is always the transpersonal network which is sensitized and gives utterance or responds. In this sense we can postulate the existence of a group mind in the same way as we postulate the existence of an individual mind".

The development of the idea of such a network involves conceiving events which are seen as transpersonal in addition to interpersonal and intrapersonal. This is stated clearly as follows (Foulkes and Anthony 1965).

"In further formulation of our observation we have come to conceive these processes not merely as inter-personal but as transpersonal".

He is quite concrete in his presentation of these processes and as has been fashionable in the twentieth century, and indeed is an integral part of this work, developed analogies with physical processes. Talking of the the matrix he says,

"Its lines of force may be conceived as passing right through the individual members and may therefore be called a transpersonal network comparable to a magnetic field" (Foulkes 1973).

In the same paper (Foulkes 1973) using this time a different analogy, he says,

"These processes pass through the individual, though each individual elaborates them and contributes to them and modifies them in his own way. Nevertheless, they go through all individuals similarly to X-rays in the physical sphere".

The idea and meaning of transpersonal processes is developed further later in this article. It may be understood thus far, however, that mankind is bound together (psychologically) by transpersonal processes into group structures whose existence leads to the development of hypothetical group matrices. Foulkes' point of view was that these group structures antedate, by many millions of years, the emergence of individual consciousness. He points out that the individual emerges very late in the development of mankind. Thus Foulkes (Foulkes and Anthony 1965) says.

"What stands in need of explanation is not the existence of the group — but the existence of individuals. The phenomenon of an individual standing in relative isolation from the group is something which only began to develop in historical times".

(A very full and brilliantly presented history of this process from a sociological point of view has been presented by Nisbet (1953)). Foulkes goes on to say that.

"appreciating this we can then gauge how very young, how very superficial is the development of individuality which begins to emerge in the period of history".

Additionally, it may be noted that Foulkes saw the processes occurring in and through the matrix as closely related to some of the psychological functions of mothers. In his various works he points out ways in which the group may be experienced as a mother. Thus he talks (Foulkes 1964) of a group of murderous mothers "which on a deep level appears to consider the group room as the mother's body and its members as if contained inside it". He also mentions a Miss P. who looks on her group as her mother. "She could not talk to her mother or of her mother in the group" — however, when she eventually was able to give the group, representing her mother, a telling off, she changed completely. Finally (Foulkes 1964) he says, "On different levels the group can symbolize a variety of objects or persons, e.g. the body — in a group of murderous mothers, "which on a deep level appears to consider the group mother — the womb. It frequently, possibly universally, represents the Image of the Mother, hence the term Matrix".

From these quotations of Foulkes a number of themes emerge:

(1) the group as mother; (2) that of transpersonal processes; (3) ideas of networks of relationships; (4) the group as a whole greater than the sum of its parts, leading to an abstract notion of a group mind; (5) the paradoxical nature of individuality.

These themes are important, evocative and controversial. The first two, however, are the most closely linked to the subject of the matrix, whilst (3), (4) and (5) follow on from them consequentially. Thus the consequence of transpersonal and interpersonal processes is a network of relationships which might give a group some qualities of mind whilst at the same time depriving the individual of some of his experience of individuality.

Full development of this chain of association is, however, beyond the scope of this essay. In the following section, therefore, transpersonal processes are explored in so far as they enable development and demonstration of the implications of the concept matrix. Subsequently the wider theoretical and clinical implications of the concept are considered.

Transpersonal Processes

It is striking that while the word 'matrix' has a long and enlightening pedigree, 'transpersonal' does not appear in the Oxford Dictionary (1971). Nor is it to be found in the most recently published English Dictionary, the highly-praised Collins Dictionary (1979). This compound word has yet to be accepted into the English language in the United Kingdom. This is not so in the United States, however; Webster's International Dictionary gives a definition as follows: extending or going beyond the personal. Thus Walter Lippmann (1889-1974), an American newspaper commentator and political author, is quoted in this dictionary as having said — "to transcend the immediacy of desire and to live for ends which are transpersonal". (Undated quotation from Webster's Dictionary).

Precisely who introduced the idea of transpersonal processes into psychology remains a mystery for the present author. Both Foulkes and Neumann (in translation) are found to be using the word quite freely, but more research is required into who first used this particular compound word in psychology. 'The transpersonal' does not appear as a named idea in Jung's collected works (in the English translation at least). Indeed the word transpersonal is not to be found in the indices of the collected works. Nonetheless, the meaning of transpersonal is implied by the idea of the 'collective unconscious' and also Jung referred to the transpsychic, which has a related meaning to transpersonal.

It might be suggested that transpersonal is a scientific or technical word born of the 'scientific' and technological twentieth century. Yet the idea of transpersonal processes is initially aversive to those who would take a traditional scientific, as opposed to a literary or mystical viewpoint. These processes cannot be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the objective scientist and there is no theoretical structure which would allow of 'transpersonal processes' in the way that Foulkes suggested. As pointed out above, he talked

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of them in the language of physical science, as if they passed through people like magnetic fields or X-rays. This form of process is most unlikely since, although what occurs may be analogous to, or appear as if some form of field actually develops in a group, the required energy to generate such a field as an objective entity does not exist so far as we know. The key to an understanding which might be acceptable may be derived from the way in which the matrix is seen to develop out of the common shared ground of the group. This is illuminated by the phenomenon of resonance whereby a group event will evoke similar responses in most, perhaps all members of a group — but nonetheless each person's response is coloured by his own individual experience and character. Such an occurrence is dependent both on the members of a group being in part psychologically identical to each other, but also on their being different. One then sees that a group obtains its wholeness not so much from processes passing through its members but by aspects of the component members of the group which are identical. The transpersonal process then emerges as an illusion but nonetheless a useful way to describe what is observed in a group.

Foulkes saw the common shared ground in an ongoing group as made up of a number of different contributions. There can be various interpretations of this, but basically members of a group have in common: (1) all that the group has shared directly; (2) the basic culture of its members; (3) that which is inborn and common to the species.

The first approximates to what Foulkes called the 'dynamic matrix' and the last to what he called the 'foundation matrix'. In Foulkes' own words,

"In speaking of a matrix we have a pyramid from the less to the more and more individual. We can shortly describe this pyramid as follows: collective, species culture, class, family, individual. The dynamic matrix, that is the matrix which changes and upon which we operate and which in the course of treatment grows in depth and dimension — this dynamic matrix is of special interest for us as we are interested in change — one might speak of 'shared change'." (Foulkes 1967).

The foundation matrix, the deepest layer of common shared ground is equivalent to what the analytical psychologists have identified as the 'collective unconscious'. Thus analytical psychologists are found to talk of transpersonal reality and transpersonal factors when discussing the collective unconscious. Neumann (1970) says in the introduction to his book "The Origins and History of Consciousness",

"In the history of mankind as in the development of the individual there is an initial preponderance of transpersonal factors and only in the

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course of development does the personal realm come into view and achieve independence. The individualised conscious man of our era is a late man whose structure is built on early, pre-individual human stages from which individual consciousness has only detached itself step by step".

Foulkes held identical views on the late development of the individual. It does not appear that he held the process of becoming an individual (indeed he doubts the existence of an individual mind) in such high esteem as the analytical psychologists. Jung himself was apparently deeply suspicious of groups. The following anecdote is quoted by Hobson (1973) who had personally visited Jung as a young man.

"What do you think about group therapy?" I asked.

Jung flung his massive arms into the air, pointed to the door and roared.

"If you fear being an individual, go off and join a group."

Neumann (1954), identifying modern man's tendency to reduce all to the personal, saw great dangers and advocated for psychology, "The task of evolving a collective and cultural therapy adequate to cope with the mass phenomena that are now devastating mankind". Here is an analytical psychologist with grave doubts about the results of individuals given over excessively to the personal as opposed to the transpersonal. These 'mass phenomena', such as were demonstrated most vividly in World War 2, may have appeared to be collective processes but they have at their root a fragmentation of society, particularly of communities, which was identified by Nisbet in 1953. He saw from mediaeval times an increasing thrust towards individual freedom and individual achievement, leading to a growing breakdown of community and associational structures resulting in an increasing alienation of the individual. Of the individual he says, "Not the free individual but the lost individual". Of current social structures, he says, "Not the framework of the new but the shell of the old".

The lost individuals or particles of social dust are then vulnerable to manipulation by charismatic figures or mass media or anything which seems to offer meaning in place of lost associational or transpersonal ties. With the best will in the world we have achieved a fragmented society in which for many, any participation in a meaningful whole, such as group of any sort, is no longer possible in a natural and unthinking way. Bohm (1980) considers this fragmentation to go very deep and that it is due to fundamental errors in our ways of looking and talking about the world. He develops this theme at length, indicating that this fragmentation of our world is present in science, the arts, in society and within the person.

The over-emphasis of the individual social atom or person has then led to many people becoming lonely and isolated, living in a world experienced as

full of hostile strangers. People have become less and less aware of their identity with others and more aware of their differences. Yet this identity is present at all levels and can, if perceived, hold people together. The precise nature of transpersonal phenomena remains unclear, but in a sense they may be seen as hypothetical bonds which hold groups, communities and societies together, as a result of the shared common ground held by their members. Thus the emergence this century of a word meaning 'going beyond the personal', may be the indication of a possible turning point in society's development, perhaps in the form of a reaction to the fragmentation process. One of the important contributions of Foulkes and group analysis has been to draw attention to the transpersonal component in what happens in groups. Discovering and accepting this shared common ground — and becoming aware of transpersonal phenomena is an exciting, perhaps frightening but ultimately reassuring, experience in a group analysis.

The Matrix as a Theoretical Construct

Foulkes worked hard with colleagues attempting to formulate a coherent theory which would explain how his successful technique of group analysis worked. He was ultimately unable to express this theory, fully developed in his writing. Thus one is confronted with the fact that although the works of Foulkes contain many seminal ideas the articulation of these ideas with each other and also with accepted psychological, sociological and anthropological theories has not been achieved, in a generally accepted way. This is no indictment of Foulkes or his co-workers, the task is self-evidently daunting.

Part of the problem which confronts us is the question of which direction to follow in pursuing the ideas left by Foulkes. There is a dilemma here as to whether the matrix and others of Foulkes' ideas are seen as central concepts out of which group analytic theory will develop or whether a reworking of group analytic theory should be carried out using in particular 'object relations theory.'

The first direction would be to consolidate and develop what Foulkes has left us. This in a sense seems the right path, and yet it is one which gives rise to anxiety. For the researchers' looking to objectively characterise group analysis, by observing the way various conductors work, there is a fear that we will find it does not exist as an entity specifically different from any other technique of group therapy. For the theorists there is a similar anxiety that the beautiful potential structure (of ideas), left behind by Foulkes will melt like a

1. I.G.A./FAS Research Committee 1980 — A research project is being developed which is aimed at studying Conductors' interventions, with the implicit expectation that conductors from different 'Schools' of therapy will generate different patterns of interventions (Convenor David Kennard).

snowflake when put under the microscope.² Group analysis may be without foundation or its foundations may comprise barely comprehensible, intangible ideas such as the matrix. Perhaps, therefore, object relations theory will give a better starting point. It is important to be aware here, however, that there is no 'object relations theory' as such but a large number of related but disarticulated and often idiosyncratic personal viewpoints. Each of these is successful in its way and each may be reflected in what one sees in a group. James (1980) presents a strong argument for a relationship between aspects of Winnicott's object relations theory and the group matrix. He compares the matrix with the illusory space proposed by Winnicott which develops between mother and child and is intermediate between fantasy and reality. In the case of the group, of course, this space develops between all members of the group. For further examples, Klein's theories of primary envy (1957) and projective identification (1946), Bion's (1961) basic assumptions and Kernberg's (1976) developments of the concept of splitting, all contribute something to our understanding of group phenomena. Balint's (see below) and Winnicott's ideas in particular have content which may be developed to account for some of the properties of the group matrix. Thus the idea of the group matrix is to an extent supported by important workers in the object relations field. There is no case, however, for saying that a particular variant of 'object relations theory' should become the basis of the development of group therapeutic or group analytic theory. Attempts to conduct therapeutic groups on the basis of theories of this nature (Bion 1961, Ezriel 1973) have led to restrictive and therapeutically unsuccessful groups (Malan et al 1976). This form of theory is basically an attempt to understand the group in terms of the properties of its component parts (individual members). The much more successful group analytic approach, on the other hand, has sought out the emergent properties of the group as a whole as well as considered the individuals of which it is composed. Emergent properties (For discussion see Popper & Eccles 1977 Chapter P1) are not predictable, so that it is impossible, for instance, to predict the properties of water, despite a full knowledge of the properties of hydrogen and oxygen. Foulkes' achievement in developing group analysis was to set aside (but not discard) his psychoanalytic knowledge of the individual so as to be able to observe, describe and utilise the emergent properties which develop from the group matrix. Thus it is to be expected that group analysis will require its own specific theory, nonetheless overlapping with theories concerning larger and smaller systems (e.g. sociological theories; theories of large groups; theories of individual psychology). Any attempt to reduce group

2. Foulkes Theory Seminar 1980 — A current I.G.A. (Lond.) Seminar discussing Foulkes' theories (Convenor Liesel Hearst).

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analysis to object relations theory would leave us with something which was no longer group analysis.

It has to be admitted, however, that the matrix remains a hypothetical network or background element in a group for which it is not possible to provide objectification. The validity of 'the matrix' as a concept can perhaps be strengthened and its potential meaning widened by noting some recent developments in the field of theoretical physics. On this occasion there is a better fit between the psychological theory and the analogous ideas from physics than those used by, for instance, Foulkes himself. It now appears that some physicists are moving progressively closer to producing theories which articulate with the ideas of psychological workers such as Foulkes and Jung. They do this out of necessity, as a result of many experiments in the field, particularly of experiments with sub-atomic particles generated at high energies. Capra (1975) and Zukav (1979) review these ideas for the general reader giving emphasis to their similarity to oriental philosophy and religion. Bohm (1980), however, is especially interesting because he is specifically relating the phenomena of matter and mind in an attempt to understand the paradoxical findings of modern physics. He often uses ways of talking about his subject whose content and meaning are strikingly reminiscent of Foulkes, and the meaning of matrix as unfolded in this paper.

Bohm proposes a form of solution of the paradoxes implicit in the theories of quantum physics and relativity. The solution is a complex one, but put simply his hypothesis is that both matter and mind are the explicate order (unfolded or unrolled³) of an underlying implicate order, both being projections of a dynamic background process or holomovement (or matrix).⁴ This both stresses the essential unity of all that is and also provides, for those who are prepared to travel this path further, insights into the many layered meanings of 'the Matrix'. The following quotes from Bohm (1980) may hint at these insights.

- (1) *"So we are led to propose further that the more comprehensive, deeper and more inward quality is neither mind nor body but rather a yet higher dimensional actuality which is their common ground⁵ and which is of a nature beyond both."*
- (2) *"In a deeper and generally more suitable way of thinking each of these elements is a projection in a subtotality of yet higher 'dimension'. So it will be ultimately misleading and indeed wrong to suppose, for example, that each human being is an independent actuality who interacts with*

3. Not Bohm's word but cf *matrix* in Latin = roll.

4. Current author's suggestion

5. Current author's underlining

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other human beings and with nature. Rather all these are projections of a single totality."

- (3) *"Thus as we have seen, the easily accessible explicit content of consciousness is included within a much greater implicit (or implicate) background. This in turn has to be contained in a yet greater background which may include not only neurophysiological processes at levels of which we are not generally conscious but also a yet greater background of unknown (and indeed ultimately unknowable) depths of inwardness that may be analogous to the 'sea' of energy that fills the sensibly perceived 'empty space'."*

In all of these quotations, the idea of a background (or matrix) in which 'things' are formed or unfold or from which they are projected, is an important binding image. These quotations cannot, of course, do justice to the way in which ideas from radically different sources appear to resonate. This can only be achieved by reading Bohm's book as a whole. Reflecting on these resonances one discovers that the boundlessness of the idea of matrix, as background to whatever stands out from it, is reflected in a boundless cosmos which can be viewed as a "dynamic web of inseparable energy patterns" (Capra 1975). Bohm reasserts the view that the universe is an inseparable whole which is only broken artificially by the atomists (Democritus, and all who have followed him). These workers have led to an ever more powerful analysis of a "clockwise world" populated by "clockwork men" (Descartes 1644). On the one hand, this analysis holds out an illusion of mastery of the world and more, and yet on the other hand there emerges a spectre akin to the child surrounded by pieces of broken clock which he cannot possibly reassemble. One might suggest that some of these displaced cogs and wheels still fill our mental hospitals today.

Foulkes has been a pioneer in the twentieth century amongst those who propose a move away from an atomistic approach to science. His idea of the matrix appears on the surface idiosyncratic and hard to articulate with other theories; yet on closer investigation it may prove to be one of the central concepts that characterizes group analysis and furthermore links it with other fundamental issues.

The Matrix and the Practising Therapist

There are many approaches to conducting or facilitating groups and countless technical issues. The intention here is to consider what the concept of matrix has to contribute in a practical way to conducting a group analytic group. It is proposed that for the conductor the idea of the group matrix provides a reference point and that a conductor's familiarity with the concept will be one of

his most important characteristics, as a group analyst. It may indeed be the *sine qua non* of his being a group analyst.

The conducting of a group poses many problems, perhaps the greatest of which is that of knowing where to apply one's attention. The same situation looked at from different viewpoints will have different appearances and different meanings, all perhaps equally valid. Each viewpoint is complementary to the others.

In achieving a viewpoint of, say, a group situation, one must consciously experience this 'whole' against its background. A continuous scanning process occurs whereby an individual searches for events of significance to focus on. At any one moment, however, the conscious mind can attend to only a single gestalt, the remainder of the universe forming a background (or matrix) necessary for the existence in consciousness of the object of attention.

As stated above, the key problem for the group therapist is where to apply his attention. In terms of the group and the individual, various solutions have been offered. The three most clear-cut are:

- (1) the focal point should be the individual. (Wolf & Schwartz (1962) — psychoanalysis in the group).
- (2) the focal point should be the group. (Bion (1961) — psychoanalysis of the group).
- (3) Group analysis.

Foulkes says of the therapist — and this is realistic and enormously reassuring:

"It would be quite impossible for him to follow each individual at the same time. He focuses on the total interactional field, on the matrix in which these unconscious reactions meet. His background is always and should consciously be the group as a whole". (Foulkes and Anthony 1965).

He also says

"A third group of observers to which I belong feel that they want to focus on the group itself as a common matrix inside which all other relationships develop. This view holds it axiomatic that everything happening in a group involves the group as a whole as well as each individual member". (Foulkes 1964).

In examples 1 and 2 above, namely psychoanalysis in and of the group, there is a clear prescription for the conductor. It is necessary to proceed a little

further to clarify how group analysis differs from the above approaches, particularly since many group analysts, from time to time, become unwitting protagonists of 1 or 2, especially in their early years of practice. Group analysis requires, as Foulkes implies, a psychological tightrope act in which one's attention should never remain fully on the individual or the group, but should always be seeking out the relationship between the individual(s) and the group. This requires of the group analyst a state of mind, in relation to the group, which is not always easy to achieve. He must be constantly scanning for the development of a variety of configurations against the background of the group and also have a special talent for reversing figure and ground. In this way, he achieves a number of complementary points of view of his group, which will be freer, more widening and more therapeutic than groups in which there is a more rigid focusing, say on the individual members of the group. This task of the group analyst is greatly assisted, if he has grasped the idea of the matrix and is aware of its importance.

Discussion and Conclusions

The concept of the matrix is hard to grasp. It is not possible to prove that phenomena corresponding to the concept of the matrix occur and there is apparently nothing to measure. A background phenomenon, it cannot be given boundaries and thus characterized. All this makes it difficult to talk with confidence about the concept and leads to a tendency to reification, which is almost unavoidable.

It is increasingly clear, nonetheless, that the idea of the matrix is a powerful one at many levels. One particular meaning is that of a formative place — where one can lay out ideas leading to new associations and syntheses. A comparable process occurred in the development of this paper, which is as much a function of the idea of the matrix as it is the work of its author. The idea of matrix has here: (1) provoked new associations; (2) brought a series of different ideas together; (3) consolidated an experience of group analysis as a valid, identifiable, effective approach to group therapy.

Overall the idea of the matrix contributes a helpful and exciting perspective of the group. It is open ended and non-restricting, allowing far more to happen than the more rigid "Tavistock" approach of Bion (1962) and Eziel (1973), or the 'psychoanalysis in the group' approach of Wolf & Schwartz (1962). It also allows a foundation for thinking about groups which the excellent but rather piecemeal approach of Yalom (1975) does not.

According to the analytical psychologists, particularly Neumann (1954), consciousness can be thought of as an individual creation which has emerged slowly and painfully out of the collective unconscious over many millennia.

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Foulkes effectively says the same and in promoting group analysis was, it might be suggested, intimating that it is therapeutic to submerge one's consciousness in a group in order to struggle to emerge from the group having strengthened and re-defined it. Thus the development of consciousness can be related closely to figure ground phenomena of perception and by extension to defining oneself against a background. The group matrix can form such a background from which a damaged individual (consciousness) may emerge revitalized. This point of view corresponds nicely with other meanings of the word matrix: (1) mother — pregnant or otherwise, (2) womb, (3) ground substance, (4) mould, (In which something is made), (5) place where something with structure, often alive or valuable is formed.

The group matrix can then be seen as providing the potential for returning to a primitive oceanic state of being (cf particularly Balint's (1959, 1965) proposal of an object relationship which he termed primary love), out of which the individual may struggle to define his consciousness, certainly in a new way and perhaps for the first time.

The group analytic group, and indeed certain other groups, may then go further and facilitate the resolution of the painful dilemma between being an individual or losing one's identity in a larger whole.

Balint (1959) says that the awareness of the existence of separate objects may be the most painful of traumata. Many, perhaps all, would yearn to return to the primary object relationship, which is said by Balint to be a state of floating in an all giving, all forgiving environment. (Note here a basic wish to return to a simpler, non-conscious state of being, "Thanatos" (Freud 1920)). Nonetheless, the world comprises objects and the individual must separate from them and tread a tightrope, lifelong, between fantasies of fusion with an object or isolation. Man has a dread of alienation and an equal dread of submergence. The very nature of things seems to deny separateness and individuality (Bohm 1980). Individuality is something which must be fought and struggled for and yet, when achieved, the reward can appear to be isolation and alienation. The dilemma is between submersion, dependency, subjugation or alienation, narcissism and despair. Nisbet (1953) demonstrates how European man has emerged from subjugation and submergence in mediaeval times to becoming an individual in the twentieth century who is no more than a particle of social dust: only if a man belongs to an association or group is he more than this. Nisbet (1966) paraphrasing Durkheim (1897/1952), says

"Man is unknowable, at least to the social scientist except as a manifestation, a node of community. The discipline of mind and character is but personalization of the discipline of the forming group."

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Normal personality is a reflection of normal integration with community. Abnormal personality is a reflection of the breakdown of this group integration."

This is correct but raises again the spectre of submergence, subjugation and loss of individuality.

Is it then possible to learn to participate in the holomovement (Bohm 1980) without drowning, to belong and yet achieve a personal identity? This is the crucial importance of the therapeutic group (and therapeutic community). It is possible in the therapeutic group to belong and fuse, have an oceanic experience, but in order to achieve this it is also necessary for the person to stand up for himself, to ultimately accept the existence of other whole objects and relate to them. By being in a group and by separating from it, it becomes possible to internalize a sense of belonging and being part of a larger whole. It is further possible that a special skill of being figure sometimes and ground at other times will be developed. The group member eventually becomes *an individual who belongs to a group*. He requires a group milieu which will facilitate this process. The group analytic group with its hypothetical group matrix provides the optimum therapeutic situation for this process so far discovered.

It now becomes possible to identify the most important skill of the group analyst, namely allowing the growth and emergence (unfolding) of a group matrix, undistorted by any inappropriate participation on his part. He has also to be aware at any given moment of his and the members' relationship to this matrix. If all this is achieved, he can be sure that in concert with 'the matrix' he will be a better therapist than alone he would ever be.

"... for the mother is also the matrix, the hollow form, the vessel that carries and nourishes, and it thus stands psychologically for the foundations of consciousness —"

C. G. Jung (1931)

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Metaphor in Group Analysis

By ANDREW POWELL

Metaphor is more easily recognised than defined. It occupies a curious place in the phylogenesis of language because its use first appears in childhood in the context of an animistic perception of objects. These objects become personified in the service of the development of vitality of symbols. An example would be that of a mother explaining to her young child that "the sun has gone to bed now". During the latency years metaphor is given less weight and not until adulthood does its expressive power return, where understanding of self and other through linguistic and dialectical interaction is necessary to the experience of being fully alive. Language becomes more than an explication of the self, it becomes a validation of the self and also the self as experienced between its different parts. This may also hold for the language of dreams and some analysts are now regarding the function of dreams as a communication of this kind (Rycroft, 1979).

In looking at the nature of metaphor we are taking up a specific aspect of hermeneutics, trying to interpret a tension arc, to use a phrase of Kohut's (Kohut, 1978), that exists between two poles but which cannot be defined by the frame of reference of either. The kind of truth we are after lies between subject and object, transitive and intransitive, word and sentence, part and whole.

Instances of metaphor lie on a continuum from the simple to the obscure. for instance, an ear of corn, a bed of roses, an argumentative melody. As complexity increases, conjoining words, in themselves metaphors, lead to proverbs, riddles, allegories and at the highest aesthetic level, works of art (Black, 1962). Aristotle was among the first to study this mix of "the lucid

