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ROUTLEDGE

PSYCHOANALYSIS, GROUP ANALYSIS AND BEYOND

TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM OF THE HUMAN BEING

JUAN TUBERT-OKLANDER

AND REYNA HERNÁNDEZ-TUBERT



This is a novel, fascinating, and fundamental contribution, since it presents, soundly and realistically, the contemporary practice of psychoanalysis, lucidly including the social dimension in its cultural, historical, political, and ecological aspects that classical theories had actively ignored. It is necessary not only for those who have a psychoanalytical perspective of our modern world, but also for other professionals dealing with mental health.

Carlos D. Nemirovsky, MD, President of the Buenos Aires Psychoanalytic Association.
Author of *Winnicott and Kohut on Intersubjectivity and Complex Disorders* (Routledge, 2020)

This book broadens our analytic insight by avoiding unilateral and uniform thinking and integrating information from several authors, cultures, and sciences, including the English, Latin-American, French, and Portuguese contributions to psychoanalysis and group analysis, as well as sociological, cultural, religious, and political perspectives, and biology and neuroscience. This is a courageous and important contribution to the never-ending search for the truth about the Human Being.

Isaura Manso Neto, MD, President of the Portuguese Society of Group Analysis. Author of *The Portuguese School of Group Analysis* (Routledge, 2020)

The authors critically review the contributions and limitations of psychoanalysis and link this to the novel view of group analysis, in its British school of S H Foulkes and the Latin-American one of Enrique Pichon-Rivière. Their approach is integrative, and they introduce the term ‘gossamer’, already used in botany for the networks of plants and trees that interconnect, to illuminate how these various centres of theory and practice articulate and fuse, thus paving the way for the development of a new paradigm of the human being. This is a major conceptual achievement that should be seriously considered.

Malcolm Pines, MD, psychoanalyst and group and analyst.
Former President of the Group-Analytic Society.
Author of *Circular Reflections* and a forthcoming book of *Selected Papers* by Routledge.

In this marriage of true minds, Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert espouse and embody ‘a new paradigm of the human being’, grounded in holistic thinking and analogical hermeneutics, which transcends dichotomies and shows the perennially oscillating figure and ground relation of individual and collective phenomena. A profound, passionate, erudite, soaring summa analytica.

Peter L. Rudnytsky, PhD, University of Florida and Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. Author of *Formulated Experiences: Hidden Realities and Emergent Meanings from Shakespeare to Fromm* (Routledge, 2019).



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Psychoanalysis, Group Analysis, and Beyond

Psychoanalysis, Group Analysis, and Beyond presents an important new paradigm in psychoanalysis and group analysis, presenting the individual and the group as elements of a wider whole and taking socio-political and cultural contexts into account.

Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert explore the contributions of group analysis to this new perspective, which suggests a holistic conception of the respective status and nature of what the common-sense view of the world conceives as the individual and the community. Part I presents thoughts on the ‘gelding’ of psychoanalysis, focuses on the limitations of classical psychoanalysis, and elaborates on key topics including epistemology, inclusion and exclusion, culture, and the real. Part II considers the reincorporation of what had formerly been excluded, through the theory and practice of group analysis. Finally, Part III bridges the gap, presenting several approaches to the building of the new paradigm that is so sorely needed.

Psychoanalysis, Group Analysis, and Beyond will be of great interest to group analysts, psychoanalysts, and psychotherapists in practice and in training, as well as other professionals specializing in group work.

Juan Tubert-Oklander, MD, PhD, is a psychoanalyst, group analyst, and marriage and family psychotherapist, who was born, studied medicine, and was trained as a group therapist in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He has lived and worked in private practice in Mexico City since 1976, where he was trained in adult and child psychoanalysis, now being a Mexican citizen. He is the author of numerous papers and book chapters, published in Spanish, English, Italian, French, Portuguese, Czech, Hebrew, and Chinese. He is the co-author, with Reyna Hernández-Tubert, of *Operative Groups: The Latin-American Approach to Group Analysis* (2004) and the author of *Theory of Psychoanalytical Practice: A Relational Process Approach* (2013) and *The One and the Many: Relational Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis* (2014), as well as several books in Spanish. He is Full Member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association and the International Psychoanalytical Association, Honorary Member of the Group-Analytic Society International, and Member of the International Association of Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy. He is Professor in the Master’s Degree Course of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and Professor and Coordinator of the Doctorate of Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis at the Marista University of Merida.

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Towards a New Paradigm of the
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Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna
Hernández-Tubert

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*For our grandchildren
Aurora Regina,
who was born with this book,
Isabella and Rodrigo,
who were with us while it was written.*



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Foreword

This collection of essays in psychoanalysis and group analysis is a product of the particularly creative intellectual and professional partnership of Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert, from Argentina and Mexico, respectively, but now living and working in Mexico. They have been married for many decades, and have produced several children and grandchildren as well as a body of literature, which has become influential both theoretically and clinically in South America, North America, and in Europe. They have succeeded in introducing to an English-speaking readership the work of psychoanalysts such as Enrique Pichon-Rivière and José Bleger, contributing to the fields of relational psychoanalysis and group analysis, and forging suggestive links and bonds with the work of René Kaës in France, Malcolm Pines in England, and with that of several members of the next generation of group analysts throughout Europe.

I have especially appreciated their willingness to engage with the core intellectual problems of our professions. I have rarely known and worked with colleagues who have so fully understood my own general approach to the study of socially unconscious processes, and my attempts to integrate sociology and psychoanalysis within group analysis. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to discuss with them their ideas and perspectives. I have been stimulated by their passion for and commitment to our work.

Juan and Reyna have become determined to go ‘beyond’ the paradigms of contemporary psychoanalysis and group analysis, and to transcend our professional and intellectual horizons. However, I wonder if we are ready and able to find new models and frames of reference that will be as fecund as the one that we have established, and that has in so many ways only just begun to bear fruit. It is so difficult to work with and love our imperfect object, especially in the context of its multitude of cultures, languages, lineages, and ethnicities, not to mention its profound complexities. Nonetheless, I am convinced that this book will become a landmark in our attempts to make clinical use of our appreciation of the sociality of human nature and the nature of human sociality in the global human group and in each individual member of it.

I truly believe that the beauty and erudition of these essays will richly compensate us for an inevitable degree of envy of the partnership of the authors of them. This book will be of lasting value to students and colleagues alike. The list of references is in itself especially useful.

Earl Hopper

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Introduction

*Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna
Hernández-Tubert*

Orthodox psychoanalysis has traditionally had an anti-environmental bias. Psychoanalysis was defined as the study and treatment of the inner unconscious mental processes of the individual and their corresponding ideational contents. Hence, any reference to actual relationships with real human beings or to the social, cultural, historical, political, or ecological context was deemed to be ‘merely external and conscious’, ‘non-analytical’, or even ‘anti-analytical’. And those who dared defy this unwritten injunction were either ignored or sternly criticised, or even expelled from the institutionalised psychoanalytic community.

This generated much discredit for psychoanalysis in many quarters, such as many branches of philosophy, the social sciences, and the Humanities, in which it was seen as a reactionary practice and ideology that ignored or actively denied the impact of social facts and the most urgent social and political problems, thus upholding the maintenance of the status quo.

This is rather surprising, since psychoanalysis started by exploring the pathogenic effects of distorted interpersonal relationships, particularly with a child’s adult caretakers, and has shown, along its history, a potential for social criticism. Something obviously happened to our discipline that hampered its development in those directions, quite apart from all its great accomplishments in the enquiry of inner life.

This major restriction of the developmental potential of psychoanalysis – which has all too frequently been imposed by political means or personal attacks – may be described as the maiming (or even gelding) of psychoanalysis. In any case, it is a sickness, and as such it requires a cure.

Nonetheless, and in spite of many spontaneous attempts at healing, curing a disease starts by establishing its nature and aetiology. Hence, the first part of the book – called ‘The gelding of psychoanalysis’ – will be devoted to the task of exploring the forms and causes of this bizarre phenomenon.

There are quite a few reasons for this restriction, and they may be described as *metaphysical, ontological, epistemological, historical, socio-political, ideological, and emotional*.

The *metaphysical* reason is Freud’s commitment to materialistic metaphysics. This is the assumption that underlies most of the current scientific conception of

the world, as well as its common-sense version, that only matter and energy are 'real'. Hence, the only possible real basis for mental phenomena is to be found in the human brain or, at least, in the individual organism. So, any interpersonal, group, or social occurrences are mere epiphenomena of neural individual events, mental constructions that cannot be considered 'real'.

The *ontological* reason is the very idea of the Cartesian subject that, although it was relativised by the psychoanalytic demonstration that it cannot be limited to consciousness, still underlies Freud's theoretical thought, which takes as the point of departure of human development an isolated individual that has yet to discover the world.

The *epistemological* reason is Freud's deep conviction that Science is the only possible source of reliable knowledge – and by this he meant natural science, which he believed to be the only valid one. Hence, his project was that psychoanalysis should become yet another natural science, as respectable as physics or chemistry, and he envisioned that in the future 'all our provisional ideas in psychology will presumably someday be based on an organic substructure' (Freud, 1914c, p. 78). This implied an utter oblivion of the hermeneutic approach of the Humanities, which is indispensable for a full understanding of personal and social processes. This belief is shared by a great part of the psychoanalytic community, particularly in the English-speaking world. Hence, their virulent attacks on those psychoanalysts, like James Home (1966), who dared question the scientific nature and status of psychoanalysis.

The *historical*, which should perhaps be called 'psycho-historical', determinant is the fact that Freud's original traumatic theory of neurosis – quite inadequately named the 'seduction theory', a veritable euphemism for paedophilic sexual abuse! – was interpersonal and environmental, and implied a severe social criticism, but was abruptly abandoned by its author in 1897. There is no real record of his reason for this unexpected turn but, ever since, Freud and his circle first, and the subsequent generations of orthodox psychoanalysts after them, have had a violent rejection of any attempt – such as Ferenczi's (1933) – to revive the traumatic theory of neuroses, or even to include environmental – interpersonal, social, cultural, political, or ecological – factors in the psychoanalytic understanding and interpretation. The underlying motivations are clearly an expression of the following items in this list.

The *socio-political* reason relates to the maintenance of social order. Freud's original traumatic theory of neuroses affirmed that the cause of these disturbances was to be found in the parents' and other caretaking adults' abuse of their charges. But, acknowledging that adults abused children opened the door to recognising other abuses of authority against the weak and powerless that are supposed to be cared for, such as teachers on students, doctors on patients, analysts on analysands, and – Heaven forbid! – the authorities on the people. In other words, it implied a stern criticism of social authority. No wonder that the young Freud received the most violent, irrational, and slanderous attacks from his colleagues and decent society when he publicly posed such ideas. But the fact that, thirty-five years after

recanting them, Freud and his circle imposed similar attacks on Ferenczi's effort to salvage and revamp the traumatic theory strongly suggests that the urge to defend and preserve the bases of social authority was the underlying unconscious motivation of their rejection of such theory, as well as of any attempt to include the social and political context in the psychoanalytic enquiry and theory.

The *ideological* reason is to be found in Freud's conception of the world and society. As Erich Fromm (1958) stated, Freud was no revolutionary, from the political point of view, but a rebel. This means that he fought against the unfairness of being left out of the positions of power and prestige, which he craved, but did not question the hierarchical structure of society. Indeed, he was rather conservative in this respect. He was quite willing to question the sexual mores of society, but not its power structure. He was part of an uprising middle class, and so were most of the members of the succeeding generations of analysts. On the contrary, most of the analytic thinkers who questioned this principle of authority and included the socio-political dimension – like Wilhelm Reich and Otto Fenichel – had a left-wing ideology.

Finally, the *emotional* reason corresponds to an aspect of Freud's biography that is not usually considered. As a youngster, he intended to overcome the social limitations imposed on him by society's antisemitism, by studying law and following a political career. After he became disillusioned with this project and replaced it by the ambition to become a great scientist, he maintained an antipolitical bias for the rest of his life (Pines, 1989). This undoubtedly affected his interpretation of social conflicts, which he reduced to the intrapsychic dimension of the Oedipal conflict (Schorske, 1974).

These are, as far as we can establish, the many reasons for the systematic exclusion of the socio-political dimension from the orthodox version of the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, there have been many attempts to redress this unnecessary limitation.

One well-known instance of such attempts has been the interpersonal and culturalist approach to psychoanalysis, initiated by Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Karen Horney, and Clara Thompson, and further developed in the William Alanson White Institute. Another one has been the relational trend in psychoanalysis, initiated by Sándor Ferenczi and continued in the work and ideas of the British Independents, Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology, and the contemporary school of Relational Psychoanalysis. But there has been another, more radical approach to the enquiry and treatment of the social dimension of human existence, one that is not usually considered within the interpersonal and relational traditions, albeit it partially overlaps and is quite compatible with them. This is the tradition of Group Analysis.

Group Analysis is not the same thing as psychoanalytic group psychotherapy. The latter is just the application of unmodified psychoanalytic theories and techniques, derived from the experience of bi-personal psychoanalytic treatments, to the treatment of individual patients in groups. Group analysis, on the other hand, approaches the task of conducting groups, whether therapeutic or non-therapeutic,

with an analytic attitude and generates new concepts and techniques, which are specific to the group situation, derived from the group-analytic experience, just as psychoanalysis has done on the basis of the bi-personal psychoanalytic experience. It also includes and uses not only those psychoanalytic concepts that are applicable to the group-analytic situation, but also those of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Such integrative approach to the study of human affairs provides a new way of conceiving the analytic endeavour initiated by Sigmund Freud. This is presented in Part II of the book, called ‘A fresh look’.

Group analysis started independently, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, in two quite separate places: in Britain, in the work of S. H. Foulkes (1948, 1964a, 1990), and in Argentina, in that of Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1971a, 1971b, 1979; Losso, Setton, & Scharff, 2017; Scharff, 2017; Tubert-Oklander, 2017b; Tubert-Oklander & Hernández de Tubert, 2004). Foulkes coined the name ‘group analysis’, and it has been since identified with the Group-Analytic Society he founded. Pichon-Rivière, on the other hand, called his theory and practice of group conduction ‘operative groups’, but, in spite of some minor differences in their respective conceptions, it can fairly be said that they represent two versions of one and the same endeavour (Tubert-Oklander & Hernández-Tubert, 2014a [Chapter 9]).

The fundamental characteristic of this common conception is the rejection of the individual paradigm, which affirms that only individuals are ‘real’, and of the alleged opposition between ‘individuals’ and ‘groups’. Both Foulkes and Pichon-Rivière assumed that human life is unitary and that ‘individual’, ‘group’, and ‘society’ are mere abstractions, constructed by a tendency of our cognitive processes to extract an aspect of a complex whole, in order to be able to think it through. The result is therefore a figure-ground relation, which can and should be reversed over and over again in order to get a glimpse of the nature of the whole. Such holistic theory and practice are characteristic of the group-analytic approach, which thus opens the way for a full inclusion of relational and social facts in our analyses.

Consequently, psychoanalysis and group-analysis are no longer in opposition to each other, but turn out to be two aspects and perspectives of the wider field of *analysis*, which was inaugurated by Sigmund Freud. But this point of view requires a major revamping of our theories, in order to bridge the gap between a perspective that starts from the assumption of the isolated individual and another one that affirms the primary and essential relational and social nature of the human being.

Both perspectives have their assets and their liabilities. Individualistic theories, such as Freud’s metapsychology, which take as their starting point the existence of an isolated subject, are very good for studying and accounting for a person’s intimate experiences and inner processes, but are at a loss when trying to explain what happens between people – that is, relationships and interpersonal processes – and the nature and functioning of collective entities, such as groups, institutions, communities, and society-at-large – that is, transpersonal processes – and their impact on individuals. Similarly, those collectivistic theories that affirm the

primary and essential relational and social nature of human beings are most proficient at describing and explaining interpersonal and transpersonal processes, but are quite unable to account for the intimate feeling of I-ness and agency that constitutes the individual subject. Obviously, it is not a question of choosing one of these two perspectives, but of transcending their dilemmatic opposition.

What we need is a new paradigm of the human being, a holistic conception of the respective status and nature of what the common-sense view of the world conceives as the individual and the community, and this is what group analysis provides. S. H. Foulkes introduced his concept of the group and social *matrix*, conceived as

the hypothetical web of communication and relationship in a given group. It is the common shared ground which ultimately determines the meaning and significance of all events and upon which all communications and interpretations, verbal and nonverbal, rest.

(Foulkes, 1964b, p. 292)

The individual personality is embedded in, surrounded, contained, pervaded, and determined by this gossamer network, which is a living and ever-evolving entity, and it is continuous with it, because the individual also has a matricial organisation.

In the same vein, Pichon-Rivière (1979) has coined his concept of *vínculo* – a Spanish term that has been alternatively translated as ‘link’ or ‘bond’. The bond (link) is a highly complex structure that includes the subject, the object (which is really another subject), their mutual relationship, and the whole group, institutional, historical, cultural, ideological, social, political, physical, and ecological context. It is essentially dynamic and evolutive, displaying a perpetual interchange between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. There is, therefore, a basic unity between individual, group, their social and political contexts, and the non-human environment.

We are truly in need of a new paradigm of the human being, to replace the dilemmatic opposition of ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ (Tubert-Oklander, 2014), and this is the subject of the various chapters included in Part III, called ‘Bridging the gap’.

The structure of the book is therefore basically dialectical, following the Hegelian triad of *thesis-antithesis-synthesis*. Part I – ‘The gelding of psychoanalysis’ – focuses on the limitations of classical psychoanalysis, which led to the exclusion of the interpersonal and socio-political environment. Part II – ‘A fresh look’ – deals with the reincorporation of what had been excluded, through the theory and practice of group analysis. And Part III – ‘Bridging the gap’ – displays several approaches to the building of the new paradigm we so sorely need. This is, of course, a major task that can only be realised by a multi-disciplinary community of thinkers, and not only by analysts, whether psychoanalysts or group analysts. But, in any case, the contribution of our professional perspective and knowledge is bound to be a significant part of this collective effort that is already on its way, from many quarters.

On the other hand, this three-part division is mainly pedagogical and related to the main formal subject of each chapter, but all of them include in their arguments the various elements of this dialectic, which is mirrored in the overall structure of the book.

One final caveat is that, even though each chapter bears the name of its main author, all our writings of the past twenty-seven years have been the result of an ongoing dialogue and shared effort. The formal authorship depended, in each case, on the circumstances of the presentation or publication of each text and on our personal penchant for specific subjects – theoretical and epistemological for Juan, social and political for Reyna, and clinical for both.

The dates included in the chapter titles are not intended as reference calls, but as a contextual information given in order to help the reader, if he or she so wishes, to follow the chronological evolution of our thought.

We trust that this new effort may be of use for our community of colleagues and students, and also, on account of its socio-political theme, that it may be of interest to students of the social sciences and the Humanities, as well as the general public, since it responds to an urgent and pressing need to introduce a new way of thinking about the relation between the person and the community. Our contemporary society, based on the individual paradigm, has fallen prey to a conception of life as a ruthless cannibalistic competition that endangers the very survival of Humankind, and the collectivistic ideologies that emerged during the Twentieth Century came into similar dead ends. Hence, the need for a radical change in our assumptions and habits of thinking and relating, and in this we believe that analysis has much to offer to society.

Mexico City, February 2021.

Part I

The gelding of psychoanalysis
