

## Book Review

Reflections for an innovative vision about persons as relational beings. Tubert-Oklander, Juan and Hernández-Tubert, Reyna *Psychoanalysis, Group Analysis and Beyond: Towards a New Paradigm of the Human Being*. Routledge, 2021.

Dear fellow colleagues, group analysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists, I would like to share with all of you my personal pleasure and intellectual enthusiasm which has been aroused while reading a very recent book entitled: *Psychoanalysis, Group Analysis and Beyond: Towards a New Paradigm of the Human Being* (2021) by Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert, two brilliant and innovative thinkers, researchers, and clinicians, who, with an extended and updated bibliography, offer us some new ideas about how to understand the way family, social, and political contexts can influence people's behaviour, since human beings have a dual nature: biological (bodies managed by a brain) and psychic/mental (minds or psychic apparatus generated from a brain) within a brain-mind-body framework and the most diverse mental phenomena (sensations, emotions, thoughts, and actions) are generated and emerge within a biopsychic dynamic, either unconscious or conscious, expressed through levels of communication and relationship, either intrapsychic or interpersonal, or even transpersonal.

This book comprises a collection of papers published during the past 25 years, in which we can find psychoanalytic and group analytic proposals, which are quite courageous and innovative, as well as written in an elegant style. All these texts are supported by a solid argumentative and epistemological structure, and very stimulating and challenging, with the purpose of rethinking and reviewing some of our 'visions' about what it is to be a 'person'. They propose lines of thought that develop new conceptual paradigms; for instance, how

to end the highly problematic opposition of what is 'individual' compared to what is 'collective' (Tubert-Oklander, 2014).

Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert advocate a need for the development of 'a general theory of mind, compatible with clinical experiences, theories, and practices' (Tubert-Oklander, 2014, p.40). They propose some critical reviews about anthropological and meta-sociological aspects of Sigmund Freud's papers, to contribute to the development of 'a new metapsychology, shared by psychoanalysis and group analysis' (Tubert-Oklander, 2014, p.33) through innovative proposals on how to reflect and conceptualize our clinical work, as group analysts or psychoanalysts. This is done by means of rigorous arguments, which are reflected in the dialectic structure of the book, organized in three sections; a first section designated by: 'The gelding of psychoanalysis', a second one entitled: 'A fresh look' and ending with a synthesis in the third part, which comprises three chapters under the title: 'Bridging the gap'. As a group analyst, the present author considers this book to be a significant contribution for a better understanding of the psychoanalytic origins of the group analytic model, as well as its deepening in the various contexts: family-related, social, or institutional.

Both authors, together or separately, have elaborated over epistemological and conceptual limitations of psychoanalysis, a method for the investigation and clinical study of the deep layers of psychic life, which was formulated by a neurologist and researcher of nervous system histophysiology, named Professor Sigmund Freud, to whom science was the only possible source for true knowledge. Freud intended to make psychoanalysis as respectable as any natural science, according to the positivist and Cartesian scientific concepts prevalent in the late decades of the 19th-century. However, he had to abandon this claim at an early stage, due to methodological limitations of scientific techniques used in neurobiological investigation at the time.

In one of his first metapsychological texts written between 1895 and 1896 under the title: *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud (Freud, 1950 [1895–1896]) presented us with a speculative scheme of the neurobiological functioning of the brain, as the locus of all mental phenomena, a biological and functionalist model of mind, the '*Mental Apparatus*' or *Psyché* model composed of structural elements, the '*neurons*' with a dynamic dimension called '*amounts of energy*' or '*Q $\eta$* ', in which he claimed that everything had a biological origin, including consciousness and affections and all other psychic phenomena derived from intentions of the explicit consciousness.

This thesis, classified currently as ‘neuropsychanalytic’, has been reviewed and updated by the psychoanalyst and neuropsychologist Mark Solms and published in the journal *Neuropsychanalysis* under the title: *New Project for a Scientific Psychology: General Scheme* (Solms, 2020) and further developed by the same author in his last book: *The Hidden Spring* (Solms, 2021).

Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert consider that ‘psychoanalysis is a hybrid and ambiguous being, a product of the mestization between scientific and humanistic thinking, rationalism and romanticism, causal explanations and hermeneutic interpretation’ (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert, 2022, p. 22). They state that Freud had developed a hybrid method between a psychological model based on neuropsychological hypotheses and, simultaneously, a psychological theory as an analogic model of an invisible psychologic organization. For Juan Tubert-Oklander, there are two Freuds: a positivist, rational and rigorous scientist, and another one, a poet and a mystic, a hermeneut. According to this author, early psychoanalytic texts were of a more literary nature and inspired in Greek and Roman mythology and cultural anthropology, while other texts were drawn from hypotheses and investigative work, in accordance with the most updated and recent medical knowledge from the late 19th and early 20th-centuries. Both authors will focus on the epistemological and conceptual contradictions and limitations presented by Freud as he tried to understand the deepest functioning of the Human Mind, from a positivist and Cartesian scientific perspective. His attempt, represented by a series of theoretical models about the mental apparatus, currently called ‘Freudian Metapsychology’, was limited by an individualistic view and avoided looking at social and political implications of these discoveries over human nature.

For the present authors, several psychoanalytic authors have already made significant incursions into the interpersonal and social implications of the psychoanalytic model of the mind. These were: Sándor Ferenczi, Ronald Fairbairn, Donald W. Winnicott (1958) and Erich Fromm, who all suffered deep criticism from their colleagues linked to more orthodox positions of Freudian tradition. For example, Sándor Ferenczi (Ferenczi and Rank, 1924), who tried to revive the traumatic theory of neuroses, in 1933, by including environmental factors (relational, social, cultural, political) on the genesis and evolution of neuroses, despite the abrupt and early abandonment by Freud, due to his fear of a possible social reaction. About this, Juan and Reyna write: ‘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’ (Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert, 2022, p.2).

In chapter three, Juan Tubert-Oklander makes interesting reflections over the psychoanalytic thoughts and writings of Donald W. Winnicott (1954, 1960, 1962, 1965), who introduced one of the greatest revisions of psychoanalytic theory on human motivation that could have replaced the drive theory. In Juan’s opinion, Donald W. Winnicott did not do it because he struggled with enormous personal difficulties and ambivalences, due to his enormous reticence and ambivalence towards Freudian metapsychology and, simultaneously, with his idealized love and intellectual recognition of Freud’s legacy. He considered that the general motivation for all human behaviour, since the baby–mother relationship, was from a non-instinctive nature, something different and separate from the need to discharge organic tensions postulated by drive theory (Freud, 1915). Donald Winnicott distinguished ‘Id-needs’, as instinctual desires of sexual or aggressive nature, organic tensions that intended their discharge in order to obtain pleasure or ‘gratification’ and, when this did not happen, there would be an experience of displeasure or ‘frustration’, while ‘Ego-needs’ would essentially be relational needs that required a loving, understanding, and empathic response from another human being and could generate either a subjective sensation of harmony or well-being when everything was in place and, if there was no answer, then feelings of futility, hopelessness and lack of meaning would arise in one’s Self over the meaning of Life. On the other hand, Ronald Fairbairn (1952) expressed clearly and directly his differences with Freud about the main motivations of people to feel, think and behave, which were more related to the search for a relationship with an object and not to satisfaction or pleasure discharge, *per se*. Moreover, all these new clinical and theoretical conceptions about the non-instinctive nature of primary needs in the object relationship are related with Sándor Ferenczi’s proposals,

However, his novel theoretical and clinical conceptions were fundamental, together with Fairbairn’s, for the emergence and development of the implicit new psychoanalytic paradigm that underlay the thinking and practice of the British Independents, and paved the way for some of the major developments of contemporary psychoanalysis, such as self-psychology, intersubjective theory and relational psychoanalysis, all of them based on the recognition of the primacy of personal relations as the primary motor of human experience, thinking, and behaviour (Clarke and Scharff, 2014). (Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert, 2022, p. 37)

In chapters five and six, Reyna Hernández de Tubert presents us with a critical analysis of Freud's sociological and anthropological texts, namely: *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1912–1913), *The Future of an Illusion* (Freud, 1927), *Civilization and its Discontents* (Freud, 1930) and *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 1939). She strives to explain which were the conscious and unconscious reasons that could be behind the several biases presented by Freud when he tried to articulate his knowledge on sociology and anthropology with his psychoanalytic concepts of conflict, defence and latency, and with his intention of comparing primitive religious phenomena with the concept of neuroses, presenting us a speculative theory about the origins of societies, institutions and myths. These texts inextricably linked to Freud's desire to achieve a more scientific alternative in relation to explanations and narratives of religious nature about the origin and development of societies. His anthropological and sociological view about the origin and nature of human species was related with his ontological, epistemological, and axiomatic assumptions about the world and life. Reyna Hernández-Tubert refers the existence of a 'Freudian Anthropology' and a metapsychology of social life, a 'Metasociology' conditioned by Freud's personal and family history and other social issues that had arisen to a young and ambitious Jewish doctor living in the Austro-Hungarian society, clearly divided by social origins, ethnic groups, and nationalities (Austrian, Hungarian, Slovenian, etc.) and with its social and political contradictions and conflicts from the late 19th and early 20th-centuries.

One of the most interesting chapters for group analysts to read is Reyna's reflection over Freud's monograph: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Freud, 1921), in which she highlights Freud's considerations about enormous (negative) interferences by groups and other collective entities that were responsible for inducing distortions in the individual psyche, since the primary sources for human psyche resided in its instinctual and psychobiological apparatus and not in collective mental processes. In Reyna's opinion, this monography is the basis for many resistances that have emerged within orthodox psychoanalytic thinking over any possibility to true individual psychological analysis, in a group context, as well as a truly therapeutic work about disturbances and psychopathology related to interpersonal relationships and interactions emerging within therapeutic groups.

Also, these authors support two important premises about the relations between psychoanalytic thinking and the group analytic model, which are:

- 1) The group analytic model is one of possible natural evolutions of psychoanalytic theories and practices which has been updated and complemented with knowledge and conceptualizations derived from social sciences and areas of knowledge called humanities (this paper's author also remarks the most recent brain-mind research, known as neurosciences and neuropsychanalysis).
- 2) As theoretical models, psychoanalysis and group analysis should be closer to each other, despite starting from contradictory assumptions about human nature, since psychoanalysis starts from an individual paradigm of the human being isolated and controlled by his biology, instincts, desires and thoughts and ignoring transpersonal paradigms of collective mental processes; while group analysis highlights human nature, first of all, as being relational and social, and trying to understand all personal constraints in their multiple and different contexts.

Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert present us their explanations about these conceptual and epistemological differences and distances between both fields of analytical inquiry concerning the origins of group analytic conceptualization, which emerged, simultaneously and without any mutual recognition, in two quite distant places from each other during the 1940s and 1950s.

- 1) In Argentina, it derived from the psychoanalytic work with therapeutic and non-therapeutic groups in the city of Rosario, an experience of social intervention led by Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1971a, 1971b, 1979), who developed an intervention and conceptualization model known as 'Operative Groups' supported by Ronald Fairbairn's studies (1952) about internal objects, Kurt Lewin's field theory, George Herbert Mead's Social Psychology and the Marxist Sociology. This kind of psychoanalysis in groups considers that people tend to create among themselves networks of relationships within different contexts (family-related, social, political and ecological), and numerous types of 'bonds' (Pichon-Rivière, 1979):

... 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 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. (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández de Tubert, 2022, p. 5)

'It also claims that groups created a single dynamic field, in which everyone present represented and recreated a part of Society as a whole (Pichon-Rivière, 1979).'

2) Meanwhile, during the Second World War, a psychoanalyst named Sigmund (Michael) Foulkes (1948, 1964a 1964b, 1975, 1990), of German origin and exiled in England, started to work in a psychotherapeutic approach with small groups of soldiers suffering from various forms of 'war neurosis' (posttraumatic stress syndrome), where he adapted the style and therapeutic rules of the psychoanalytic model. He called this type of group psychotherapy approach *group analysis*, based on Kurt Goldstein's holistic theory of organisms and nervous systems and the sociological theories of Frankfurt School. Afterwards, he introduced a new group and social concept, '*the matrix*' (Foulkes, 1973), which allowed him to explain the appearance of hypothetical networks of communication and relationship among the members of these groups and would combine, contain, disseminate, and determine everyone's experiential aspects with relationship and communication styles that established among the members present in each group.

Also, the book's authors draw our attention to the founders of these two schools of psychoanalytic group approach: the School of Group Analysis of S.H. Foulkes (1948, 1964a 1964b, 1975, 1990) and the Psychoanalytic School of Social Psychology initiated by Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1951, 1971a, 1971b, 1979), who had both avoided and even ignored oppositions and contradictions that were emerging in their writings and thoughts facing their psychoanalytic heritage, since they were elaborating new references for comprehension of people's behaviour within groups and social contexts.

In chapter nine, Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert (2014a) address the similarities and differences in relation to certain basic issues between these two traditions of psychoanalytic work in group context:

- 1) For example, in Foulkes's perspective (1961) about the conductor's role, it ranged from an attitude of active administrator during initiation and initial stages of group process, to becoming a mere interpreter of group's communications and phenomena, while Pichon-Rivière's perspective (1971a) about the group conductor was to be more active in his dialogues, as a transmitter and facilitator of group processes. In fact, one of the debates proposed in this book refers to the conductor's role and positioning vis-à-vis the group, as a member, simultaneously inside and outside the group, but never fully integrated or merged with it.
- 2) Another issue is whether the groups have their own tasks; Pichon-Rivière proposed that all groups, therapeutic or non-therapeutic ones, have a latent task to help its members develop their skills and knowledge, to work as a team. For this author, the group always had a dual task: one was trying to achieve its therapeutic objectives (external task) and another learning how to operate as a team (internal task). Foulkes considered that there was not any definite task in his therapeutic groups. They should work in a situation of 'floating free discussion', equivalent to the free association of psychoanalytic bi-personal relationship, and there would be a 'training of the ego in action' (Foulkes, 1964b) for each member of the group. For both authors, there was a fundamental main therapeutic objective, the development of a *Foundation Matrix*, for Foulkes (1964a) and, for Pichon-Rivière (1970), the development and deepening of an '*Conceptual Referential Operative Scheme (CROS—ECRO in Spanish)*'.

Another interesting aspect of this book (chapter 11) is a new systematization about the nature of *Large Groups* according to their main purposes (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert 2014b, 2014c):

- 1) *Problem-centred Large Groups*, more widely used within the tradition of *Operative Groups*.
- 2) *Experience-centred Large Groups*, with no defined tasks other than the possibility of any participants being able to share their thoughts or feelings, over issues of social and political nature (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert, 2014c). These large groups usually integrated in symposia and congresses of the

group-analytic tradition, which may be intensive and daily, or on a more continuous basis. Also, they used in training courses or for teaching purposes for psychological or medical students. In these types of groups, Juan Tubert-Oklander and Reyna Hernández-Tubert claim that they exercise their hybrid-style in conducting these large groups in an intellectual and emotional mode, integrating an array of Latin American and Mexican conceptual miscegenation. They designate their approach, both psychological and sociological, as ‘Voices in the Wind’ (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert, 2014c), a more present and assumed conducting style in what relates to attitude and type of interventions. They start these large groups with sharing a minimum of information about why or what are the actual intentions of being together, with a clear purpose to establish a certain type of analytical contract with all present members or, alternatively, by distributing a small information leaflet at the beginning of these events. As large group conductors, they propose to help the present members in finding their ways to express all regressive, defensive, and silent movements resulting from their anxieties, schizo-paranoid positions and other confusional states that could emerge in any dynamic in these type of groups. For the interpretations and interventions, the authors try to search and collect the different voices they have heard, explaining the problems and questions that have arisen, as well as the workable solutions proposed by present members, with the intention to help them to think and address the tasks and questions that they have proposed collectively.

- 3) *Therapy-Centred Large Groups*, represented by the so-called large groups initiated more than 40 years ago, in Buenos Aires, by Jorge E. García Badaracco (1990, 2000) in psychoanalytically-oriented therapeutic communities contexts and more recently developed, in Portugal, under the name of *Large Multifamily Groups* in a psychiatric hospital environment (day-hospital) led by a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists (Isaura Manso Neto, Paula Godinho) and psychologists (Maria João Centeno, Ana Teixeira and Isabel Fialho (Centeno et al. 2001; Centeno et al. 2010; Godinho et al., 2012).
- 4) *Research-Centred Large Groups* are a combination of the three previous types, based on problem solving, learning through experiences. The most classic example referred in the book is the social intervention experience that occurred in Rosario City,

Argentina, guided by a team of psychoanalysts and group therapists led by Pichon-Rivière (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert, 2022, p. 137–138).

Further on, we can read Juan Tubert-Oklander's conference held in London during the *2019 Annual Foulkes Lecture*, organized by Group Analytic Society International, under the title: 'Beyond Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis', where he expresses his positions and visions on how he conceives people's mental functioning, as relational beings, immersed in the most diverse experiential contexts. He presents his opinions about a better articulation and approach between psychoanalytic thinking and the group analytic model, since he considers this last model of thinking to be a natural evolution from the previous one.

Throughout the whole book, the authors present us with a new vision about the functioning of the Mind, as something not limited to individual body boundaries, but rather a place for communication and interaction processes extended throughout interpersonal and transpersonal dimensions of relationship, as an organized system of ideas expressed at a social level, as if the mental structure were a transitional space for interactions created by all members of such social systems, just depending on their interpersonal relationships and their capacity for collective sharing in that same space, the '*we-centric*' space. Also, they propose that both conceptualizations, psychoanalysis and group analysis, should be more complementary to each other, and it would be a real advance towards a better articulation of different mental level dimensions of our psychic apparatus with relational, interpersonal, and social aspects of human beings.

Also, we can follow interesting efforts to articulate, conceptually and epistemologically, all these different fields of action (dual, small and large groups) towards a new holistic theory about the analytic field, which will transcend the traditional boundaries of different disciplines:

What we need now is to develop a new paradigm of the human being that integrates the discoveries, insights, and views of analysis—both psycho-analysis and group-analysis—with those of the humanities and the other sciences—biological and social—that study the human being. (Tubert-Oklander and Hernández-Tubert, 2022, p. 178)

They challenge us to develop new conceptualizations, more in accordance with holistic paradigms for a better approach and understanding of all complex situations, entities and processes that emerge

in interactions between Individuals, either at the group level or at the social level. They propose the need for a new vision, which will be able to better perceive human relationships between the individual and collective levels, beyond the individual and the group.

Since 2004, Juan Tubert-Oklander (2014) has been developing a new proposition called the '*syncretic paradigm*', which allows for an easier integration between individual mental processes and the relationship and groups process. He has integrated the ideas of José Bleger (1967, 1971), a disciple of Pichon-Rivière, about a 'third basic position' (the 'glischro-caric position' or 'agglutinated nucleus'), which is integrated into Klein's proposal of the two basic positions: depressive and paranoid-schizoid, and Blanca Montevecchio's (1999, 2002) concept of a syncretic functioning of the Mind. Juan suggests the existence of a fundamental state for group situations when the group members are trying to communicate with each other, creating a state of psychic syncretism whose experiential quality is ambiguity and where there is no differentiation between the inside and the outside, between the subject and the object, between the mind and the body, between the masculine and the feminine, or any other notion of difference, suggesting the idea of a continuous and homogeneous collective entity individually containing the subjects immersed and allowing then the existence of spontaneous flows among them, at the deepest level, while their differentiated parts have to communicate with each other by other indirect means.

### **Final comments**

This book is extremely useful and interesting, as it challenges us to rethink and review our understandings, as group analysts, of how we develop our work of analytical inquiry with people who, despite being unique and individual, have their motivations and ways of thinking and feeling deeply connected to interpersonal and transpersonal mental processes. Also, it is a great contribution for deepening our understanding of unconscious phenomena that occur both intra-psychically and at interpersonal and transpersonal levels when people enter in relationship modes and interact with each other. It highlights the importance of affective and emotional issues, the process of memories and empathic and resonant capacities of each group member which are interfered with by the different contexts related to each group member's personal development within a bio-psycho-social context.

As group analysts, we must continue to update our clinical and theoretical concepts supported by the latest clinical research and new proposals of conceptual integration from both the field of psychoanalytic and group analytic thinking.

In the author's opinion, this book lacks its attention towards all the new scientific information coming from different areas of scientific research and knowledge, such as the neuroscientific (Panksepp, 1998; Panksepp and Biven, 2012) and neuropsychoanalytic research (Solms and Nersessian, 1999; Solms and Turnbull, 2011), and also other areas, as neuro-philosophy (Northoff, 2004), neuro-psychiatry (Panksepp, 2004), or even physics of biological systems (Friston, 2010), which are addressing the neurodynamic brain's functioning, in particular, the mental/mind apparatus interfaces regarding emotions, affections and feelings, affective and cognitive consciousnesses, the perceptions and memories (implicit or declarative) and the overall mental processes (defences, attachment, empathy, theory of mind, identification) (Cozolino, 2002/2010, 2006; Solms, 2020, 2021).

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