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## A Response to Farhad Dalal's Foulkes Lecture, 11th May 2012

*Kevin Power*

After two recent analytic events—the EGATIN weekend workshop on *Love Passion and Intimacy* in Lisbon two weeks ago and the following weekend a morning presentation and response from Iain MacGilchrist on his recent book, *The Master and his Emissary* (2009)—I felt I had much additional material with which to resonate with Farhad's lecture; what I present here is a collection of responses to the lecture and not a measured and argued article.

To the lecture itself. I think his broad argument—that psychotherapy and group analysis are ethical activities through and through—is unchallengeable. However I was struck by the relative absence of references to groups, and where the only example of human interaction was that between Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell (and *that* rhinoceros). So I would like to introduce some of these elements in order both to reinforce what I think Farhad has given us and to expand on that provision.

What stayed with me after a first reading was the idea of love as the main element of relation between patient and therapist. Only what kind of love? And in what manner might this be expressed by the therapist? English is poor in words for the range of loves there might be. Greek has four words covering various kinds of love, which in English are covered by that one word, love—no wonder Brits have difficulties.

These four forms are:

eros — philia — storge — agape

*Eros* is passionate love that includes desire and longing for another individual; it is intimate love very often of a sexual nature but not wholly so. It covers the English term, 'being in love', reason swept away by passion.

*Philia* is the love found in friendship and affection, in warm regard. It includes dispassionate and virtuous love for family and friends and also activities and even lovers too. Pat de Maré's use of the term *Koinonia* or communion or impersonal fellowship, might well be placed alongside *philia*. The US city of Philadelphia has it as a root.

*Storge* is a natural affection such as parents have for their children and children for their parents—'Mummy, I love you' . . . 'And I love you too'.

*Agape* is general affection and 'true love' as opposed to being 'in love'. Holding someone in high regard or deep respect and resembling the 'unconditional love of God'. In the Christian New Testament of the Bible it is described memorably by St Paul; this is from the New English Bible for clarity of expression:

I may speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love I am none the better.

Love is patient; love is kind and envies no-one, Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and its endurance. (1st Letter to the Corinthians, Ch. 13, v. 1–7, 1970)

In the first paragraph of this quotation, there may be some echoes of what yesterday's lecture suggested about the manner in which some analysts may go about their work, though I fear that we all inadvertently may have adopted such an attitude before and may well do so again. And this long quotation calls to my mind a strong echo of it from T.S Eliot's poem *Four Quartets* (1943), where he writes,

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope

For hope would be hope for the wrong thing: wait without love

For love would be love of the wrong thing: there is yet faith

But the faith and the hope and the love are all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought.  
(Eliot, 1943 [1989], Section III, East Coker, Four Quartets)

This love described by St. Paul and elaborated by Eliot is I believe *agape*, and it is this kind of love, perhaps even ‘the love that passes all understanding’ that I believe Farhad is presenting to us as a prime element in therapeutic work that reconnects people more fully to their humanity. I do not argue with that in a final sense yet do hold in mind what Foulkes wrote, of ‘following the group’s lead is *following with discrimination*’ (1975), that is, avoiding being drawn into the group’s prevailing climate, and remain beyond it as, say, the group’s meteorologist who endures the weather along with the members while keeping calm about the effects of it all on the group.

Freud’s remark that whenever two strangers meet they immediately begin an unconscious psychoanalysis of one another was taken up by Foulkes as a backing for group analysis. I have no quibble with the use of the term ‘analysis’ and the idea of the ‘analytic attitude’. The conductor is responsible for setting up an analytic enquiry for the group’s benefit. It is also what the group set free in themselves so long as it is mainly what the group is doing and not merely what the analyst does, an attitude that might be imposed by the conductor and which seeks to supplant what the members discover. The Foulkes’ quotation in which he plays down the use of transference interpretations is a main statement as to the role of the conductor yet it is worth recalling that Foulkes was nevertheless keen on the conductor’s role in encouraging by example the analysis of defences and resistance. Foulkes does speak of the ‘monopoly’ conceded in certain techniques to transference and its interpretations.

What can happen in classical psychoanalysis maybe akin to what the English poet William Wordsworth states in the line, ‘We murder to dissect’ (1789 [1967]: 104), where living relatedness is murdered by insensitive and overbearing dissection by the analyst and in which after a while the patient may take part, adopting analytic jargon—as if to do so constituted a step in the right direction. This is something that I guess can also happen in a group with a determined ‘dissecting’ conductor.

Group analysis is mainly an unconscious process through which the members proceed in their own language—and not our professional language register—whereby each member exposes more and

more of him/herself as trust expands and intimacy deepens. And this happens through the language of word and gesture and body language, in embodied space and through time. That it is a face-to-face group including the conductor recreates a human situation that has existed for many, many thousands of years. This situation is one permeated by communication that includes much language and a good deal more via non-linguistic means. Language is thought now to have started around 80,000 years ago, which raises the question, what preceded it? It did not pop out from behind a bush.

In *The Master and his Emissary* Iain McGilchrist presents a strong case, backed by many studies, that it was music and harmonies that preceded word-language. In his book he states that mothers make cooing and humming noises with their babies as they look at them and when they are looking away as a means of staying in touch with them. So do fathers, and the brothers and sisters. People do this with their dogs and cats. The family stays in touch in similar ways beyond language. Apes and monkeys spend endless hours grooming one another and so do humans to a certain amount even now, caring for one another. When the human group became too large and too dispersed to have grooming as the main bond, the noises and harmonies possible with voice may have brought about harmonic identification of the members of each archaic human group.

There still exists remote people in Amazonia such as the Piraha that utilizes singing, humming and whistling as conversation to maintain links and communicate intentions and actions. So was it possible that early human groups discovered harmonies that tended to pull them together so that they knew their fellow members well in advance of meeting up and were able to tell strangers from those known? That over generations this moved towards identifiable noises for identifiable things, but it was shared pre-language feelings that made them know one another? For instance, what might have been the voiced reactions of our primordial ancestors when they saw a shooting star, or were hard-pressed by a thunderstorm? How did they respond to the sound of light rain falling overhead on fully leafed trees—was this music they may have tried to emulate?

Any moral or ethical system has to arise from within the group otherwise such a system will be an imposed system that belongs to and is to the advantage of the leader of the group. If Freud's primal horde did exist it was a dictatorship awaiting overthrow. Then the brothers talked, and also the sisters or even more so the sisters and mothers who as child bearers had perhaps more time while suckling

children to consider among themselves the ways in which they lived (while the men as hunters and gatherers perhaps communicated together about how to gather more food? And where to gather? And where to hunt and how to bring down the prey or how to cut it up? And then with the women how to divide up the food?).

Farhad seems unconvinced of psychotherapy as a specifically *scientific treatment*, a tension between facts and values. Foulkes in his 1975 book urged all group-analysts to be involved in both science and art so that the outcome would produce a religious approach, with which we come round again to the notion of *agape*.

Again, if the psyche is constituted by power-relations, then we had better acknowledge this. In the erotic myth of Psyche and Eros, it is Eros who exercises power, arranging that he and Psyche meet only on his terms (Eros is in bed with Psyche). Yet this is also a myth of power relations and the overthrow of maternal authority, of a strong mother and son (Venus and Eros) bedazzling and enslaving this young woman until remorse arises in Eros, the son puts aside his mother's commands and weds his bride—but what Psyche thinks we are not told.

In seeking meaning we are becoming human; if in this process of meaning-seeking we uncover a meaningless universe, nevertheless humans are making meaning while doing so; it is the process of meaning-making that makes human culture. Authentic meaning-making evolves from our relations and our thinking with others, in the group, via our 'music-making'.

I did wonder if there was really anything the matter with saying thanks to the cooling breeze! There may be a god of the cooling breeze who will send more such breezes if you are thankful for it—which is why we say thanks. Arriving home in the rural dark where I now live I am grateful to look up on a clear night and see stars and planets and have a link with previous generations of humans. It provides some non-human moments in an otherwise human-filled day. I also am equally glad to welcome rain.

Farhad's reflections on I-It and I-Thou made me think of Thomas Carlyle's essay, *Signs of the Times* (1829) containing his remarks on the effect he considered that the industrialism of those times was having upon people's lives. He wrote,

Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand . . . Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character . . . We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time; in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favours and its manner of conducting

them; in its practical aspects, its politics, arts, religion, morals; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole currents, of its spiritual, no less than its material activity. (Carlyle, 1829)

At the time of his writing this, the British industrial revolution had been underway for around 70 years, two human generations. We are now more than seven generations into being shaped and framed within and without by mechanism, by energies that are more than animal-muscular, and by the various and subsequent stages through which this titanic alteration in human consciousness has run and is running its course. Now the computerized stage has us mirroring ourselves in tele-visual and electronic screens and what they show us to be like. Our analytic groups are fairly unique in that they still reflect us in the mirrors of other humans' perceptions as a shadow of how we came to be human over tens of thousands of years.

McGilchrist has things to say about Buber's 'I-It' and 'I-Thou'. I-Thou arises from the brain's right hemisphere and is pre-language, as it is for mother and baby. I-It is from the brain's left hemisphere. If language is the means whereby the world is manipulated and mastered it nevertheless tends to turn the world to I-It relations, 'a world that in the process is transformed from the I-Thou world of Music (and the Right Hemisphere) to the I-It world of words (and the Left Hemisphere)' (McGilchrist, 2009: 114).

Might not the impression left by the haughty tone of voice in which the word 'patient' is pronounced be perhaps a leftover from the era when tone was all, in the music of the world? Is 'tone of voice' a reminder of communication as singing, as music? It does suggest that we are in different camps in terms of language-class and professional-class and social class. Yet the word 'patient' has history. It derives from the same root as passion, a word often used approvingly nowadays. Both terms derive from the Latin 'pati' meaning suffering, hence a sufferer; passion, patient, patience. As a reference to one seeking medical attention it dates from the late medieval period and from 1795 as a distinct 'suffering person'.

While looking up derivations I came across this quotation illustrating its use in the 18th century: 'He that is not free is not an Agent but a Patient' (John Wesley, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1973). i.e. the Patient does not have agency in the world and can seek to become, however unwittingly, an Agent. Interesting that one NHS Trust is now texting patients three days before their next appointment in order to decrease the number of those not attending; it is working apparently, only does it help people become agents in the world?

That 'Heart will have its reasons that reason cannot know' (Pascal, 1909) is well known though unheard by those of a left hemisphere (LH) persuasion. Heart may be unable to comprehend why reason does certain things yet heart, or more precisely the right hemisphere (RH) of the brain, has a more overall responsibility; it needs to use Reason where it is required. Larger Reason does not banish metaphor and music, both of which are not appreciated or even deemed to exist so far as the LH is concerned. RH appreciates all that the LH does, yet in our era the LH is in danger of believing only its own propaganda of logic forever, whereas the RH is not so much sending out propaganda as standing apart from it. This is the basic message from McGilchrist's book, that right hemisphere has been pushed aside to a place of virtual irrelevance while the demands of left hemisphere become ever louder and more insistent. Such changes in value reflect in the human brain and diminish and fracture humanity, turning us into mirrors of our own technological creations.

The current furore around evidence-based treatment in psychotherapy—or else no funding—is a case to look at. It is driven by the procedure of the Random-Controlled Trial (RCT) that originated in the pharmaceutical industry for the testing of new medications on humans, after having been laboratory-tested on animals and in non-animal tests. It may be a good way to test such medications though only successful tests are ever published (and which is not correct scientific method) and occasionally they go very badly wrong. Now because this would seem to work for medications it has been transposed to human clinical interactions. What is a way of testing chemical compounds ingested by humans is also deemed a suitable - indeed, the paramount! - way to test human interactive episodes and their effects on patients—to the exclusion of all else.

Farhad's lecture raises the question of just how 'scientific' is psychotherapy and group analysis? He uses the term *scientistic* to describe those procedures that mimic scientific method yet cannot be its essence. The fundamental aim of scientific method is to discover objective truths that hold good when repeated in the same conditions anywhere in the world and perhaps anywhere in the universe. This may well work in the material non-animal world, and it can also work in animal and human bodies, when certain serums and formulas do cure certain maladies all the time, especially invasive bacteriological diseases. However to insist that all human interactive treatments are tested and valued as though they were chemical experiments is patently absurd, an attitude wherein LH reasoning is in definite



control; the emissary has become the master and pushed the master into early retirement. Logos has concretely triumphed in ways that those who originated the idea of Logos would themselves have barely recognized.

When I am expected to provide evidence-based proof that membership of an analytic group has been useful to an individual, I am told that patients must complete forms at the start and perhaps in the middle and then at the end of treatment. These forms will apparently show that the person has improved or not: they have limitations but do provide at least some kind of measuring scheme. Yet the last thing expected or given value is to ask the individual if they feel that s/he has improved. This omission avoids the variety of responses likely from people freed via group-analysis from the dominance of mental illness whose self-assessments are likely to be multifaithful and diverse.

To conclude this serendipitous response I would like to quote a group-analyst well known for his sagacity and humility, brought to my attention in reading a recent lecture of Harold Behr's (2011). In his Response to Adele Mittwoch's lecture in 2001, Dennis Brown declared that,

Ours will never be a physical or even a natural science. It will at times have an interesting exchange with these disciplines, for example through neuropharmacology, neurophysiology and evolutionary theory. But it will remain a *social science* and *hermeneutic discipline*—even an art—concerned with *relatedness*. This is not a matter for shame. (Behr, 2011)

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