

The cover features three decorative elements: a large blue circle with a smaller inner circle in the top right, a medium-sized similar circle below it, and a large blue circle with a smaller inner circle in the bottom right. Two thin blue lines cross the page diagonally from the top left to the bottom right.

*Some thoughts on the  
relationship between*

***Quakerism  
and Group  
Analysis***

**Diploma in Group Analysis  
Theory Paper**

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## INTRODUCTION

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HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT GROUP ANALYSIS HAS MANY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A QUAKER MEETING? THERE IS A LOT OF SILENCE WHILE PEOPLE WAIT FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. THE SILENCE HAS MEANING BECAUSE WE ARE WAITING FOR SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO APPEAR BY VIRTUE OF THE FACT THAT THE GROUP IS MEETING. WHEN NOTHING IS HAPPENING, RATHER THAN FILL THE SPACE WITH SOMETHING TRIVIAL, THE GROUP WAITS FOR THE SIGNIFICANT SPIRIT TO APPEAR. THE GROUP SOMEHOW KNOWS THAT WHEN SOMETHING IMPORTANT WILL COME IT WILL BE DISCERNED AND RECOGNISED.

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Beaumont Stevenson (1999)

This paper is an attempt to develop my thinking on the relationship between large/median group processes as they are thought about in Group Analysis and how they are conceptualised in the Quaker tradition.

My motivation for writing this Paper is a very personal one. I am a Quaker, and have attended a Quaker meeting for the past 12 years (the equivalent of 300 or so large group experiences). By participating in the Block training of GAN/IGA I miss 10 Quaker meetings a year, and replace them with 20 large groups within the training course. So there is a time clash – I can't attend a Quaker meeting and the course at the same time. I have also felt an internal tension between the two seemingly diverse ways of understanding human nature and the nature of the group. This Paper therefore is an attempt to work on this tension that resides inside me concerning two apparently incompatible approaches to the life of the group. My wish is to avoid a psychological split – between the sacred and the profane, body and soul, good and bad objects – an aim which, despite their differences, unites the two traditions of Quakerism and Group Analysis.

I am not the only person who has done thinking on the links between Quakers and Psychotherapy (see Wallis (1988) and West (1995)), and in an everyday way there are links that exist between Quakerism and Group Analysis. For example, David Kennard works at The Retreat in York, which is owned by a Quaker Trust. At a local level, several members of my Quaker Meeting are involved in running groups of various kinds or have completed the Manchester Introductory Course in Group Psychotherapy.

This Paper is not an attempt to compare Quakerism and Group Analysis at an organisational level i.e. to consider the Institute of Group Analysis to a religious sect. This analysis is possible. Group Analysis indeed has a charismatic founder, creeds, rituals, rites of passage for its devotees, and its "holy cows". This is not however what

interests me. This type of comparison has been made several times with the Institute of Psychoanalysis, often with a view to criticising the theoretical coherence of psychoanalytic ideas.

The Paper is laid out as follows. In the next section I briefly make some points about spirituality and religion, arguing that this is a legitimate aspect of enquiry for group analysts. I go on to give some background information about the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and their approach to group worship. I then attempt to use Foulke's concept of the matrix and Bion's "theory of thinking" to develop a set of thoughts about the relationship of the individual to the group in Quakerism. Finally, in order to complete the dialogue between Quakerism and Group Analytic thinking, I suggest how Quaker insights might inform Group Analysis itself.

## THE NATURE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

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Freud's view of religion was that it was essentially an illusion that stemmed from a child's desire for an idealised father figure. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* he states, "*the derivation of religious needs from the infant's helplessness and longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible*" (1930:9). Religious belief, in this formulation, is something to be analysed as an aspect of the functioning of the superego and ultimately to be renounced. Bion is more sympathetic to the notion of religion as a legitimate area for psychoanalytic investigation. He states,

*Psychoanalysts have been peculiarly blind to this topic of religion... activities which can be called religious are at least as obtrusive as activities which can be called sexual.*  
(Bion 1973:15)

More recently people have questioned a strictly "scientific" reading of Freud. Bettelheim (1982) suggests that Freud's use of the German "die seele" implies that "soul" rather than "psyche" is the better translation. He argues the word "psyche" was used because of the pseudo-scientific connotations of ancient Greek. Tick (1992:7) argues that the word psychotherapist can be translated as "attendant of the soul". Odilon de Mello Franco (1998), developing the ideas of Bion, argues that spiritual concerns should stand alongside sexuality as an area of psychoanalytic concern. Just as we would not dismiss the idea of sexual dynamics in group relations, neither should we dismiss the notion of spiritual concerns being present within Large Group functioning.

This, of course, begs the question what do we mean by religious or spiritual? The OED defines "spiritual" as:

*of spirit as opposed to matter; of the soul especially as acted upon by God; of proceeding from God, holy, divine, inspired; concerned with sacred or religious things.*

At the core of the Quaker faith is the tenet that all aspects of living are sacred and that we can draw no distinction between spiritual and everyday concerns. All of life is spiritual (c.f. Latin *spirare* = breathe). However, to state that all life is “spiritual” is comparable to stating, “everything is north”. With no comparison there can be no definition and no analysis. Perhaps a Quaker definition of “spirituality” would not be a demarcation of an aspect of living and contrasting this with other areas, so much as seeing it as *a way of viewing all aspects of living*.

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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Quakerism started in the Seventeenth Century by its radical leader George Fox. It was one of a number of movements that sprung up at that time as part of the Reformation, when people questioned the traditional authority of the Catholic Church as an institution. Previously the word of God had been mediated through the priest. Quakers and others believed that the spirit of God could be experienced in a much more direct way – via reading the bible and in an unmediated experience of the spirit. The word “Quaker” was a derogatory term that was given to the followers of George Fox who were seen as being so fanatical about religion that they quaked! The radical and austere beliefs of Quakers put them into conflict with the establishment. Believing that everyone was a child of God and that all life was sacramental, they refused to use titles when addressing people or to take off their hats or bow to officials. They refused to swear on the bible in court, as this would imply a double standard of truth. Crucially they refused to bear arms and were seen as potential agitators by the monarchy. Quakers were persecuted for their beliefs and to this day the main organisational meetings of Quakers are called “meetings for suffering” from the time when the main purpose of such meetings was to record which Friends had been persecuted or imprisoned. Many Quakers fled from persecution to America. William Penn formed the state that was named after him, Pennsylvania. Friends in this country, hard-working and yet marginalized from public life, put their efforts into the new emerging business enterprises and many wealthy Quaker families emerged such as Rowntree, Bournville, and Cadbury. By the nineteenth century Quaker industrialists became well-known philanthropists, campaigning for the abolition of the slave trade, reform of prisons, and decent conditions for factory workers.

Quakers today are quite different from their predecessors. They are neither persecuted nor part of a wealthy industrial elite (the most infamous Quaker of modern times is probably Richard Nixon!). There are around 15,000 Quakers in Britain today and around another 30,000 people who regularly attend Quaker Meetings. The breakaway from Christian orthodoxy that started in the C17<sup>th</sup> has continued. Many Quakers today would not call themselves Christian. The Religious Society of Friends manages to hold together people who describe their religious beliefs in a variety of ways. This includes people

who would describe themselves as believers of other traditions (e.g. Sikh, Buddhist), and people who would describe themselves as Humanists.

## QUAKERS AND GROUPS

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Quakers come together in the *meeting for worship*. This typically lasts for an hour and involves people sat in a circular arrangement, facing a small table. This usually has a small floral arrangement upon it, a copy of the bible and copies of one or two Quaker texts. In these Meetings Quakers attempt to consider the nature of a spiritual life within the silence. Quaker worship is often described as Silent Worship. While this is not strictly true, it is true that Quakers do not have the usual trappings of conventional church services – there is no music or singing of hymns, there is no set service of readings or prayers. Quakers worship in silence in order to listen to “that still small voice of God” or to gain a sense of “the inner light”. The silence allows for reflection and thought. It creates a space in which the on-going concerns of individuals or the dynamic within the group are made secondary to the experience in the moment. The silence allows for contemplation on spiritual concerns. The emphasis is on listening and openness to “the spirit” within the group.

Another important aspect of Quaker worship is “Group-ness”. Quakers choose to worship in groups because of the belief that something happens in groups that does not happen when one is alone. In the Christian tradition this is reflected in the passage in the bible, which states, “*for where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them*” (Matthew 18:20). Worship is a collective activity because the aim of Christianity is to be in a relationship with God and other people (the first commandment is to love God, the second commandment is to “love thy neighbour as thyself” Matthew 22:37-39). The core belief of Quakers is that there is that of God in everyone. That is to say, that which is divine – which is most precious about humanity – can be found in each human being. It is also an expression of connectedness. It is not possible to split people into categories of good and bad, damned and saved, because the actions of each person are a reflection of an aspect of the whole.

Responsibility for what happens in Meetings for Worship is shared by all participants. There is no paid clergy, and what happens in Meeting is not under any one individual’s control. Quakers use the term “gathered Meeting” to describe the experience of being in a Meeting where participants are connected together in worship rather than experiencing themselves as separate individuals in the same room.

All participants have a responsibility for “ministry”. Ministry includes all communications and actions by people that allow others to have a sense of God in the world. This is a broad category that includes practical tasks (e.g. helping others) and also silence within the Meeting for Worship. Ministry, however, mostly refers to words spoken within the Meeting. Anyone can stand up and say something within the hour of the Meeting. This includes readings from the bible and other religious texts with a

commentary, statements of a Quaker view of current happenings in the world, spiritual concerns that have been occupying particular Friends, and responses to what others have previously spoken about. It is unusual for a Meeting to pass by in complete silence. It is also rare for more than half a dozen or so people to speak within the hour.

Quakers also meet in a variety of other groups, which are called Business Meetings. These are where the practical affairs of the Society are decided. These groups are also viewed as places for spiritual activity. The meetings start and end with a period of silence. There are no votes taken about decisions. The aim is to reach a sense of unity. This is not born out of a desire for uniformity or even consensus. It is rather an aspiration to discover the will of God. The responsibility for individual Friends (with an effective right of veto) is to respond to and respect the views of the meeting as a whole, even when individual opinions differ.

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## A GROUP ANALYTIC VIEW OF A QUAKER MEETING

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A Quaker Meeting although different from a Large Group has many similar features. In particular participants come together for a common purpose of increasing their understanding of themselves in relation to the Other. In a small therapeutic group the parallel is one with the family and the focus is upon personal interaction and exchange between individuals. By contrast, in a Large Group the individual is reduced, what s/he experiences is not a collection of unique relationships with others, but rather various ways of relating to the Group as a whole. The individual's sense of skin or boundary is altered so that the group temporarily takes over aspects of the ego. The danger with all types of group experiences is that the reduction of individual ego leads to "crowd" phenomena where the group behaves without rational restraint. What may seem like a "spiritual" experience can be no more than a function of being in a Large Group and the dissolution of ego boundaries that this entails. Turquet gives that name "Basic Assumption One-ness" (BaO) for this phenomenon. He states,

*Members seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force, unobtainably high, to surrender self for passive participation, and thereby feel existence, well-being, and wholeness... the group member is there to be lost in oceanic feelings of unity or, if the oneness is personified, to be part of a Salvationist inclusion.*

Is to lose oneself in a group experience a dangerous delusion? Foulkes built Group Analysis on the radical idea that our taken for granted notion of the individual was no more than "an artificial, though plausible abstraction" (Foulkes 1948:10) and that "the individual is conceived as a nodal point... suspended in the group matrix" (Foulkes 1964:118). He goes on to state,

*The group as it were avails itself now of one speaker, now of another, but it is always the transpersonal network which is sensitised 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 (1964:118)*

To fully appreciate Foulkes view of the relationship of the individual to the Group and the Other we must appreciate the concept of the matrix. The word “matrix” comes from the Latin *mater*, meaning mother. Foulkes (1964: 292) defined it in the following way:

*The matrix is 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 non-verbal rest.*

Foulkes distinguished between three different aspects of matrix. He used the term “personal matrix” to refer to the internal dynamic world of the individual. This is linked within the small group situation to what he referred to as the “dynamic matrix”. This is what we refer to most times that we refer simply to “the matrix” (i.e. the shared common ground built into the history and culture of the group). Lastly, he referred to the “foundation matrix”. This can be linked to his notion of four levels of group process. These are: (1) the current level, (2) the transference level, (3) the projective level, and (4) the primordial level (Foulkes 1964:114). It is this last level, which Foulkes saw as comparable to Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious, which is most relevant to the idea of the foundation matrix. The foundation matrix in Foulkes view is “*based on the biological properties of the species [and] also on the culturally firmly embedded values and reactions*” (1975:131).

The matrix, in addition to being a technical concept that allows us to think about communication within a group, also implies a fundamentally spiritual notion of relationships. That is a concern with the intrinsic wonder and value of being human and the perception of the *relatedness* of individuals that overrides narcissism. In discussing the necessary qualities of a group analyst, Foulkes (1975:158) advised:

*Whatever his own tastes and political convictions as a citizen, he must be liberal enough in a deep sense to treat all human people in his group as equal... in a profound sense we are equal human people. One might almost say “equal” in a spiritual sense.*

*(italics added)*

In this sense a Quaker Meeting can be seen as an exploration of the essential connectedness and relatedness of humanity; a humanity that does not reside in its constituent parts, but in an appreciation of the whole. Significantly, an appreciation of connectedness and wholeness depends upon an acknowledgement of difference. To be in a relationship there has to be an acknowledgement of separateness from the other. It is this tension that is expressed in Foulkes phrase, “*suspended in the group matrix*” (1964:118). We are alone in the world and joined to humanity at the same time. Lawrence et al (1996) introduce the concept of “Basic Assumption Me-ness” (BaM) to



Turquet's "Basic Assumption One-ness" (BaO). BaM implies that individuals act as if no group or relatedness exists (a form of individualistic narcissism). He later goes on to suggest that these two basic assumptions may be connected in that they are ways of avoiding the complexity of struggling to relate to something (the group, the world) that is complex and frighteningly overwhelming. Foulkes (1990:227) describes how he first developed the concept of the matrix in response to his sense of awe at what he experienced in his groups:

*[my] experiences in group-analytic groups led me to see the existence of a superpersonal mental matrix... I thought to myself, "what an enormous complexity of processes and action and interpretations play between even two or three of these people, or these people and myself, or between even two or three of these and another three, and so on. What enormous complexity, quite impossible to perceive and disentangle even theoretically all at the same time. How is it that they can understand each other, that they can to some extent refer to a shared and common sense of what is going on? [...] And the same applies to me myself"*

It is this sensing of the complexity of the whole, an awareness of something that emerges when "two or three come together" (Matthew 18:20), which is "impossible to perceive" (Foulkes 1990:227) that is the essence of a spiritual approach to the Group/Other. What is important for Quakers – the group nature of their worship, and waiting with an open heart and mind – can be seen in group analytic terms as a way of developing an understanding of the foundation matrix, a concern with a living exploration of our shared humanity. A task that is both impossible to strive for (c.f. Foulkes "enormous complexity"), and yet everyday in its realisation. This is because it is only our intuitive appreciation of the matrix that allows the shared communication that we are all familiar with as group analysts. Powell (1994:25) sums up my thinking when he states:

*The "total situation" of which Foulkes speaks is yet again an attempt to capture in words what we instinctively sense, that the whole is profoundly more than the sum of its parts. We have to find a word for this totality of meaning, and the name we give to it is, of course, God.*

## QUAKER WORSHIP AND BION'S THEORY OF THINKING

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To consider further how the Quaker method of worship makes possible an investigation of the foundation matrix, I need to refer to Bion's "theory of thinking" (1967). Bion argued that thinking arose out of the infants need to deal with thoughts, rather than thoughts being the result of thinking. The infant is born with "pre-conceptions" the most important of which is that of the breast. It knows that a breast exists prior to the experience of the breast. When the infant suckles on the breast there is no need for thought. It is only when the infant experiences a no-breast that thought emerges. For

Bion, thought is “the mating of a pre-conception with a frustration” (1967:111). Two things can happen at this point. The first is that thought becomes a bad object, fit only for evacuation. Bion compares these intolerable thoughts to missiles that are used to annihilate psychic space. However, if the infant is able to tolerate frustration, what emerges is the ability to learn from experience with the aid of thoughts and thinking. The crucial element in this process is the mother’s capacity for reverie; that is, her ability to accept the projected elements of indigestible raw experience (beta elements) from the infant in order that the infant may reincorporate them in a form that is tolerable. Bion called this process by the mother the alpha function. If the mother is unable to perform this function, the infant reintrojects a “nameless dread” and has to rely on omnipotent defences against unbearable and attacking thoughts.

What relevance does this theory have for group life and Quaker Meetings in particular? Firstly, it implies that thinking (by which Bion means, the capacity to process experience and engage with the external world) is fundamentally an inter-personal experience. It is something that happens as a result of relationships. Initially, this is embedded in the relationship with the (m)other, but later this process occurs more widely. Bion (1967:118) states,

*[alpha function and normal thought] also develop as a part of the social capacity of the individual. This development, of great importance in group dynamics, has received virtually no attention.*

Foulkes argued that the group was always a primordial, symbolic representation of the mother (this indeed led him to use the term matrix). The group has the capacity to perform the alpha function for individual members. It is the container for ideals and hopes, and also for unwanted and disavowed aspects of self. The group, with its sense of continuity and capacity to survive, allows for something new to emerge. From the nothing (the beta elements that are not available to thought) emerge conceptions. The group acts like a cool surface upon which previously unformed moisture in the atmosphere condenses into droplets of water. Conceptions are not created by the group (or the individuals within it) any more than the cool surface creates the water droplets. Water in the atmosphere has been on the earth for millions of years in different forms (it has been in the oceans and rivers and streams, in clouds, in ice creams and paddling pools, as part of plants and animals, and within all the people who have ever lived since the beginning of humanity). The basic elements of experience in any group potentially connect us to all the other experiences that have been lived in the group life of humankind – elements of love and hate, of newcomers and departures, of inclusion and exclusion, of despair and stagnation, and hope and renewal.

When Quakers come together for Meetings for Worship they aim not to proselytise or to lay down a set of rules or beliefs by which to live one’s life. Instead the Meeting is a place for reverie, for what David Armstrong calls “Thinking 2” (where thoughts emerge as a result of attention and awareness to the “notknown”). By tolerating the frustration that comes with not knowing and waiting in the silence, Quakers hope for something to emerge – a conception, a birth, *or resurrection*. The lack of a creed amongst Quakers is

not borne from a desire for liberal inclusiveness, but is laid upon the faith that true insight comes from the experience of worship – the process of being in a group, of waiting and listening, of striving to live with others in both unity and diversity.

## WHAT DOES A QUAKER VIEW OF GROUPS HAVE TO OFFER GROUP ANALYSIS?

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So far in this Paper I have used group analytic ideas to help the reader consider the processes that take place in the Quaker Meeting for Worship. Is there an exchange that can take place in the other direction? What have Quakers to offer group analysts? One thing that Quakers have is accumulated experience. They have met in silent meetings since the middle of the C17<sup>th</sup>. The experience of group analytic practice is tiny in comparison; the experience of conducting median and large groups even smaller. Here are some thoughts on what a study of Quakerism might offer an interested group analyst.

Firstly, a different set of stories and myths with which to explore the nature of the unknown. In addition to Goldstein's neurology used as metaphor (Foulkes 1975:12) we have the Bible's "you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). With a different vocabulary we are able to explore the resonances that are embedded in language. Just as English doesn't have words that are necessary for certain types of experience and so has to borrow from other languages (e.g. what would we lose without the word *déjà vu*?), so group analysis must use the language of religion if it is to have access to the experiences that people describe as spiritual and religious. Without such a language there is no container for our half-glimpsed awareness of that which is beyond our experience.

Perhaps Foulkes was not helpful in encouraging our exploration of this aspect of our existence? Nitsun (1996) indicates that Foulkes' personality may have lead him to neglect the more negative aspects of group dynamics. We may also wonder about how Foulkes' experiences of being a German Jew in the 1930s affected the development of his ideas on group life. The changing of his name from Siegmund Heinrich Fuchs to SH or Michael Foulkes suggests a possible desire to reject aspects of his national and religious identity as something unhelpful or even dangerous. He states,

*"[an] objection to religion in the sense of denomination or of any system of religion existing in the world, [is that] as true scientists, it is hard for us to treat any such religious system differently from any other mythology or superstitious belief" (1976:159).*

Perhaps we need to consider aspects of Foulkes personal matrix, in the context of his times, which prevented him from exploring religious aspects of the foundation matrix?

Secondly, I think Quakers have something important to say about the nature of communication. Quakers are not so concerned with the personal and dynamic aspects of the matrix that occupy most of the thoughts of group analysts. A Quaker Meeting has little speaking compared to a Large Group. De Maré et al (1991) emphasise the importance of *dialogue* for transforming the hate that is born out of the frustration of group life. Quakers suggest there are forms of communication that are not about “dialogue” or exchange. The idea of a “gathered meeting” is not related to the quality of talk or interaction between individuals. Rather it is an attempt to describe the non-tangible aspects of communication. This concept is familiar to all group analysts in their notion of unconscious communication. Yet communication implies “*the act of imparting (especially news)*” (OED). The notion of *communion* in contrast (“*sharing, participation, fellowship*”: OED) implies a shared and mutual relationship to the whole. Something akin to an electrical circuit, where the electricity does not reside in any one aspect or part, but flows through the whole.

This issue has always been fundamental in attempting to understand group relations. How can we explain aspects of communication which are not *inter*-personal, but which are *supra*, or *trans*-personal? Foulkes used the analogy of the magnetic field (Foulkes and Anthony 1965:259). Powell (1994:23) goes further, suggesting a possible *psycho-physical* basis to the notion of the matrix, and he argues that we should not see the connections of the matrix as merely metaphorical.

Quaker thinking suggests that, by embracing silence and waiting, we can be open to aspects of communion (sharing) that are beyond the ego and interpersonal concerns. A child-like question that comes to me whenever I see a pictorial depiction of the matrix [see figure 1] is, “*if the lines between nodal points represent communication, what lies in the spaces in-between the lines?*”. If we are “*suspended in the group matrix*” (Foulkes 1964:118), what is the nature of the substance in which we are suspended? A Quaker Meeting is not so much concerned with the lines of communication, but with the nature of our “*suspension*”. To change the analogy again, Quakers are concerned not only with the content of the voice that is heard on the radio, but also with the nature of the radio waves themselves. It goes without saying that in having this view, one becomes less and less concerned with the *content* of talking, and increasingly concerned with the *process* of listening to what cannot be put into words.

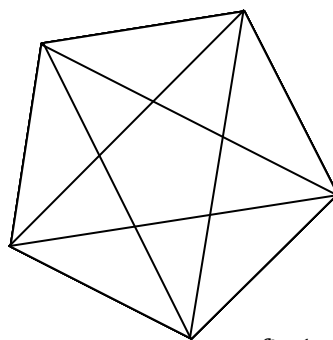


fig.1: pictorial depiction of the matrix

Thirdly, Quakers provide a model for the making and establishing of links between reflective-listening processes and political actions in the world at large. Group analysts

are indeed active in considering how they might utilise their professional skills and apply their understanding to external, “real life” group issues (e.g. working with victims of torture, holding conferences that bring different nationalities together). I am sure that there are many activities by individual group analysts of which I am not aware. Yet this is very small scale in comparison with the Quakers who, despite their limited resources, have offices at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. There are also Quaker centres in Cape Town, Brussels, Belfast and Moscow, and representatives in many other areas of the world. These offices have been used to bring together people from different communities, and to provide a place for negotiations and conflict resolution. The standing of Quakers as “pacifists” has allowed them to work quietly, behind the scenes, in a number of negotiations. They played a small role, for example, in the creation of the Oslo Peace Accord between the Palestinian council and the Israeli government. In addition to past concerns with slavery, prison conditions and factory working conditions, Quakers today continue to make representations to the government concerning issues such as the Jubilee 2000 campaign, the rights of refugees and disarmament issues. Although such actions may seem tangential to the Quaker faith, on the contrary, these actions stem directly from an understanding of the falseness of dichotomies of political and religious, individual and group, internal and external. Quakers are able to be tolerant of difference in opinions and open to new learning, but without descending into apathetic relativism or cynical post-modernism. In many ways the challenge for Group Analysis is in the development of the Large Group as a cultural and political tool. If the distress of the individual is in significant ways an indication of distress within the group, how can Group Analysis act from this understanding? Some may claim this is beyond the remit of the IGA or GAS. My view is that to restrict Group Analysis to a narrow therapeutic task is an attempt to create an enclave from the confusion and threats to identity in the contemporary world. To separate oneself from this is as delusional as seeing the individual as autonomous, or attempting group therapy without an appreciation of the matrix. To have a sense of the whole, of which we have limited knowledge and little control, is to be threatened with feeling of being overwhelmed. To be aware of the foundation matrix, and to have a sense of yourself in place and time, is to be involved in with the wider whole which extends beyond the Large Group to the realm of society and politics. Although this is not a new argument (see Hoggett 1992), it remains an area to be continually grappled with by group analysts.

## CONCLUSION

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In this Paper I have attempted to begin a dialogue between the two traditions of Quakerism and Group Analysis. My aim has not been to do a simplistic comparison and contrast, but rather to begin a genuine exchange of ideas. I used Foulkes’ concept of the matrix and Bion’s theory of thinking to elucidate processes within the Quaker method of worship. I went on to argue that an awareness of the spiritual, consideration of our shared communion, and a concern with political/external action are three areas where

Group Analysis has something to learn from the Quaker tradition. I believe that Quakers have something very important to learn in reflecting further upon the *group* nature of their worship. Equally, Group Analysis can use insights developed in Quakerism to move away from individualistic thinking towards a fuller appreciation of what Foulkes described as the *transpersonal network* of the matrix.

## POSTSCRIPT

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In writing this Paper, I have had chance to reflect upon my own thinking. Where, for example, did this Paper come from? Van der Kleij (1993:27) describes the process of writing about spirituality and not knowing where it will lead or what will be revealed. I have argued that all thoughts come from the group. I first presented a version of this Paper at the Monday Seminar of GAN in June 1998, but this is not that Paper. New thoughts, different constellations, emerged as a result of the things people said to me that evening. I have had numerous conversations with people since then about Quakerism and Group Analysis. My computer tells me that I have amended this document thirty times (meaning there have been thirty occasions where I have sat down and typed something and deleted something from this file). In submitting the Paper it seems it could become an artefact, a thing no longer alive but separate from the process that created it. For this reason I want to find a better word than “conclusion” which implies *a termination, a final result, a shutting of a door* (OED), because this is a conversation which is only half had. I would be very interested in receiving comments and thoughts in response to what I have written, and can be contacted by email at the following address: [antony\\_froggett@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:antony_froggett@yahoo.co.uk)

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