

Response

Response to Article by Joshua Lavie With reply by Lavie and further response

Farhad Dalal

I found it difficult to respond to this article as the editor of *Group Analysis* requested of me, and it took me a while to understand why. In part my difficulty was to do with the fact that although I was in broad agreement with the tenets of the article (in regards to Elias), I found myself fairly mystified at Lavie's gross (mis)representation of me. I should say at the start that I do not think for a moment that *Taking the Group Seriously* (Dalal, 1998) is the last word on the subject, and that there are not things said there that need to be taken issue with. There are many things there that I myself now conceive of and think about differently (as evidenced in *Race, Colour and the Processes of Racialisation*, Dalal, 2002). So my issue with Lavie is not the fact that he finds my work wanting, but why, mysteriously, Lavie portrays me as supporting the very ideas that I have spent two books arguing against.

So in this Response I will not only engage with the content of Lavie's thesis, but also with the *forms* of argument utilized in this article and the functions that they might serve.

Argument by Accusation

Lavie begins by asserting that it is interrelational individuals rather than 'the group' which should be taken seriously. He then accuses me of asserting that one should take 'the group' rather than 'individuals' seriously (first sentence). There are two things here. First, I deliberately use the word 'accuse' rather than an alternative like 'reason', because Lavie does not substantiate his statement with any evidence – i.e. citations. He makes a *pronouncement* which I am unable to dialogue with, because there is nothing to engage with apart from the pronouncement itself. As it stands, his pronounce-

ment is nothing other than innuendo. It is surprising to me that the referees for this article have not picked up on this critical lack of actual evidence for his allegations here and elsewhere.

The second point follows from the first. His accusation in the first sentence is that I allegedly assert that Foulkes and Elias say that one should take the group seriously rather than relational individuals. This imputation then throws me into a position of defence. The problem is that the position I am being invited to defend is not one that I actually believe. Thus, the accusation being made is in the form of the well known trap, 'have you stopped beating your wife?' To answer in any way – yes or no – is to tacitly agree that one *has* at some point beaten one's wife. So one could then reframe Lavie's accusation as the challenge: do you believe in the group or the individual? My answer is: neither. As Lavie himself agrees, what Elias seeks to do is to undermine and dissolve the individual group dichotomy.

Lavie also says that I abstract and reify the concept of the group. Once again, on what grounds does Lavie make this assertion? In response, I would invite him to look, at the very least, at some of the last paragraphs of *Taking the Group Seriously*, and ask him to think about what has happened to the 'abstraction' called group. For example:

This is one of the enduring ironies, that the project of taking the group seriously has led to the acknowledgement that groups do not exist as natural fixed entities, but are always constructs. (Dalal, 1998: 226)

To take the group seriously is to come face to face with nested Chinese boxes within boxes, each filled with paradox. One of the many paradoxes is that the act of differentiation is simultaneously the act of creation. In the very act of differentiating the 'us' from the 'them', the 'us' and the 'them' are created. Another paradox then follows, which is that the 'us' and the 'them' need to be differentiated before they can 'work together'. (Dalal, 1998: 226–7)

Perhaps Lavie has got so blinded by the title of the book, that he has somehow come to miss the deconstruction process that the book actually consists of.

Argument by Creed

Lavie's thesis is that while I am mistaken in what I attribute to Foulkes and Elias, he, meanwhile, has found the 'first missing root' of group analysis. What I would say to this is that the project I am

engaged and interested in is not one of seeking to re-discover and re-cover the lost authentic roots of group analysis. *Taking the Group Seriously* is not a quest for what group analysis is ‘really’ about. That kind of essentialist project does not interest me as it is fundamentally conservative in its aspirations, seeking to fix things and so is ultimately stifling and stultifying. Rather, my interest is in trying to understand some of my own dissatisfactions with group-analytic theory; of trying to tease out the contradictions and inconsistencies in order to use these to recast and *develop* further the elements of group-analytic theory that are meaningful to me. Hence the word ‘post’ in the subtitle of the book. History is indeed important – but it can be used to control and shut things down rather than open them up.

Arguments that uncritically proceed on the basis of what Foulkes or whoever ‘really’ said are a form of religiosity, and are ‘argumentation by creed’. In this way of thinking alternative ideas are dismissed and said to be wrong on the basis that they are not mentioned in the holy books; this in turn leads towards creating a backward looking fundamentalist group-analytic dogma.

Thus, even if I were proposing (which I am definitely not) that the group is a ‘naturally’ existing entity, for Lavie or anyone to discount the idea on the basis that the progenitors did not speak of it, or did not approve of it, is tantamount to crying ‘heresy!’ and is untenable as a form of rational argument – or at least the versions of rational argument that I am interested in participating in.

Argument by Mocking

In several places Lavie uses a mocking tone to make his points; for example he mocks my use of the notion of an orthodox and radical Foulkes: ‘The main argument which Farhad Dalal postulated, *as though* there were an orthodox Foulkes [etc.] . . .’ (2005: 534, italics added). He is of course free to mock. I do nonetheless feel the need to reassure him that in using these terms I was not suggesting that I think that there is a homunculus called Orthodox Foulkes in the body and mind of the person called Foulkes – or that he had a split personality. The notions of radical and orthodox are no more than *analytic devices* which I found useful in sorting through the contradictions in Foulkes’s work. Is Lavie suggesting that there are no contradictions or inconsistencies in Foulkes’s works (or Elias’s for that matter) – that it is a ‘whole’? But how could there not be

contradictions in Foulkes's work given the enormity of the enterprise that he was engaged in, which was nothing less than a fundamental paradigm shift in a hostile context?

Rather importantly, it seems to me that in Lavie's descriptions of Foulkes's struggle between multipersonal mind and matrix, Lavie is making the same points as I do through the notions of the orthodox and the radical, something he seeks to obscure through the strategy of mockery.

Argument by Excitement

Lavie is much exercised by the fact that I do not cite from Elias's work *The Society of Individuals* (1991a). His excited assertion is not only that he has found the source of the hidden mysteries in a 'lost' work of the master, but that I have got caught up in a kind of false text, and so have come to lose the true group-analytic way. Fair enough: I do not cite from this work – and maybe that is indeed an error on my part – but is Lavie seriously suggesting that the thoughts that are found in *The Society of Individuals* do not occur in any of Elias's other works? Lavie says that '*The Symbol Theory* was Dalal's main book for his construction of a post Foulkesian theory based *apparently* (my italics) on Elias. As we see, Elias (and Foulkes's) theory of group analysis was based on another book *The Society of Individuals*' (2005: footnote 8).

There are two points here. First, I do not think that Elias's definitive work is *Symbol Theory*, and his other works are lesser for some reason. Second, even if it were true (although I cannot see how) that the Elias that wrote *Symbol Theory* were the opposite of and antithetical to the Elias that wrote *Society of Individuals*, on what grounds does Lavie choose one over the other? Why is *Symbol Theory* only 'apparently' Elias, while *Society* is allegedly 'really' Elias? The question is particularly pertinent given that *Symbol Theory* was in large part written after *Society of Individuals*. So if one were to give one text more weight than the other (which I do not wish to do), surely one would be led to give more weight to the latter work over the former. Or does Lavie think that Elias too lost his way?

It seems to me that this is another version of the argument by dogma – or more to the point – it is the process of actually creating a dogma.

The Charge of Ideology

At one point (footnote 7) Lavie says ‘Dalal fell into the trap of ideology, thus fighting individualism while praising the group’. In saying this, Lavie reveals that he thinks that his work is not ideological – whereas mine is. But here is one charge that I fully and gladly accept: my work is indeed ideological – but so is Lavie’s – it cannot be otherwise. Surely one of the central pillars of Elias’s work is the notion of power-relations which are integral to all human relations and include our intellectual endeavours as well as therapeutic ones. Thus, ideology (as an aspect of power relations) permeates all human existence; it permeates all our psyches and our works; this is the radical implication of Foulkes’s notion that the ‘social permeates to the core’. It is interesting to me that Lavie makes no mention of power in his piece, and in itself is evidence of the ideological strand that Lavie is pursuing. Ideological processes are unconscious processes, but one can sometimes catch a glimpse of them through a self reflexive inquiry. Thus (leaving aside what I actually believe and think), the question I would ask of Lavie is what motivates his desire to support the notion of ‘relational *individuals*’ over that of ‘the group’? I think that in teasing out the answer to this question he would find out something about the ideological strands he finds himself pursuing.

All ideas, Elias’s and Foulkes’s works, as well as other people’s engagements with them – of which my books are but a part – are of necessity aspects of power relations. Ideas are never neutral and objective as the positivists would have it. Thus, Lavie’s take on things is part of this power struggle as I will describe below.

Argument by Splitting and Denigration

Let me begin with why I *think* that Lavie has found it necessary to proceed in this way. It seems to me that his intention is to use my work as a foil to promote his ideas. There is nothing wrong in this as a strategy. However, he has a problem if the ideas he is arguing against are not too dissimilar from the ones he is proposing. It is perhaps because of this that he finds it necessary to make such gross distortions. His technique is one of attributing to me ideas and beliefs that I do not sign up to, and then proceeds to dismiss these imagined fictions in a cursory way.

It is at the very least curious that Lavie finds *no* points of commonality, *no* points of agreement, *no* points of overlap between

what he is saying and the work he is criticizing. Surely then, his is an exercise in true and extreme splitting – the generation, the creation, of a good and bad, a right and a wrong, with *no* point of contact between them.

To my mind, Lavie's work ends up being a kind of *gossip* in the Eliasian sense of the word, the intention of which is to *differentiate* through the process of *denigration*.

The Fallacy of Absolute Beginnings

The key word in the mechanism just described is 'differentiate'. Lavie is seeking to lay claim to a particular intellectual territory for himself; there is nothing untoward in that. However, the way he is doing it is to make it appear that no one has been in this territory before – that it is uninhabited. This is not unlike the strategy employed by the European colonizer who managed the remarkable feat of 'seeing' the Americas and Australia as empty of history and people. This is an instance of what Elias called the fallacy of the 'absolute beginning'. The point of the absolute beginning is precisely in order to expunge what has gone before as though it never existed – and as such it is an ideological act. So what is the substance of Lavie's article?

1. That Elias furthered the notion of relational individuals rather than 'closed people'. Has no one said this previously?
2. Elias's book is called *Society 'of' Individuals* and not 'in' or 'and'. Was this invisible to others prior to Lavie mentioning it?
3. A lengthy part of Lavie's article consists of a direct quote of a conversation that Dennis Brown had with Elias – a conversation that was previously printed in *Group Analysis* and so already in the public domain (thus it does not constitute 'archival' material). He cites this at length to make the point that Elias did not disavow Freud, but elaborated him. Again this is hardly novel. The issue that needs to be taken up is: in what ways does Elias take up Freud, and what are the consequences of that? *What is missing is critique*. Just because Elias has spoken, it does not make him inevitably right. *Parts* of Elias's theorizations fundamentally undermine the Freudian schema and directly contradict it. In other places Elias can be read as substantiating the Freudian notion of the superego by historicizing it (but not in a straightforward way).

4. In the subsection entitled 'Foulkes's Innovative Conception of the Mind', Lavie has indeed brought something new to the table. Lavie wants to argue that 'really' Foulkes wanted to promote the idea of the 'individual mind', but got cold feet and went instead for the idea of the matrix. Lavie's grounds for this is to trace the evolution of the title of a paper through three steps: in the first Foulkes uses the terms 'multi-personal and transpersonal', then only 'transpersonal', and finally he alights on the notion of 'matrix'.

This movement is interesting – but on what grounds does Lavie take the liberty of saying that the first of these is what Foulkes *really* meant? How does Lavie *know* this? What of the perfectly feasible alternative interpretation that in this evolution we are witnessing not a *flight* from the idea of individual mind, but a progressive working out of an idea to arrive at a place that Foulkes was happy with. If Lavie wants to argue for the former idea (which is not an unreasonable one, even though I do not agree with it) – then he has to substantiate it, not just assume that this is so and state it as though it were a self evident truth. Surely his methodology, that of 'micro-historical research', requires such substantiation and argumentation.

5. Finally, Lavie is most excited by finding that Mitchell uses the idea of 'multiple selves' and finds an affinity there with Foulkes's discarded title – *Mind as Multi-personal*. He is further 'astonished' by the fact that Mitchell also uses the term relational matrix. OK, but so what? Ogden too featured a book with 'matrix' in the title.

The issue surely is not just the use of these terms, but what they actually mean. For example, although Mitchell uses these terms, in the citation that Lavie provides in footnote 11, Mitchell retains a categorical distinction between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal – in other words the ideas of the internal and external worlds as distinct spaces. Thus, there are differences to be attended to in the two discourses (group analysis and Mitchell's ideas), and they certainly are not the self evident 'Siamese Twins' in the way that Lavie simplistically takes them to be.

I personally have a lot of time for Mitchell's ideas, but I do not think that one can import them directly into group-analytic theory without subjecting them to a critique, through which (if

the critique is to be worth anything) both Mitchell's ideas as well as the version of group analysis one is using, are bound to be deepened and so transformed.

In conclusion, I would say that while this article makes a lot of noise, and is littered with terms like 'astonished', 'remarkable' and so forth, I genuinely do not know quite what the excitement is about. The material Lavie has found in the archives and told us about in this article (the evolution of the title of a paper) is certainly interesting, but is unrealistically overburdened by the task that Lavie requires of it – some kind of seismic shift in group-analytic thinking. It also seems to me that this seismic shift is redundant – what Lavie is saying is not all that new and hardly earth shattering. What is clear is that Lavie wants to privilege the idea of the (relational) individual over that of the group; that is fine, but in doing that he is in the company of many others; once again, it is hardly a novelty.

I would say that in seeking to privilege the notion of the individual *in the way that he does*, Lavie is taking a backward step and missing the cutting critique that Elias is making of the dichotomization processes. The question is not to do with whether we should privilege the relational individual or the group – this feeds the false dichotomy. The question rather is to do with how it is that human beings, through nothing more than their interactions with each other, paradoxically come to generate the very constraints that form them. One of these constraints we sometimes name 'society', at other times 'group'.

The concept of figuration . . . expresses what we call 'society' more clearly and unambiguously than the existing conceptual tools of sociology, as neither an abstraction of attributes of individuals existing without society, nor a 'system' or 'totality' beyond individuals, but the network of interdependencies formed by individuals. (Elias, 1994: 214)

Critically, it is also the case that it is *the processes of relating* that come to generate the constraints that modulate the types of relationality that are possible for individuals. This is what valency is about. It is not enough just to say that individuals have valencies. A question to ask of Lavie is: by what process, from whence do individuals come to have their particular valencies?

Finally, given that Lavie is so proud to be doing something called 'micro research' – by which I presume he means 'attending to

details' – it is curious that he treats the writings of all the people he mentions as though each were homogenous and a coherent whole. In other words he seems to be blind to the details of the contradictions inevitably to be found in all the great thinkers due to the fact that their views shift and evolve over the years.¹ Thus, one cannot just talk of Freud or Foulkes or Elias – one is bound to make clear *which* parts of Freud (e.g. first or second instinct theory, etc.) one is reaching for, and one would also have then to justify why it is that *that* version of Freud is being made use of rather than another. This point is particularly important because the volume lauded by Lavie, *Society of Individuals*, is not a unified piece. Elias calls the text experimental as it consists of three essays written over a period of 50 years or so: 1939, 1940s and 1950s, and the last in 1987. In each essay Elias parses the *same* territory:

. . . the first [essay] shows the earliest *stage* of my reflections on the problem of the single person within the plurality of people, the theme announced by the book's title. The second part is an example of later work on the same question; the third is the latest and final stage of this *continuing* work. (Elias 1991b: p. ix; my italics)

The key words are 'stage' and 'continuing'. Hence, I would say that Lavie cannot treat this volume as a coherent homogeneity precisely because Elias himself shifts his position over the half century he spends considering the paradox of the individual social dichotomy. Anyhow, it is this kind of homogenizing process that allows Lavie to treat the protagonists in his article as *all* good or *all* bad.

Given the distortions in Lavie's article, I will end by saying something of what it is that I do in fact try to argue. My critique is not aimed at the idea of the individual but of *individualism*, by which I mean the Romantic deification of the individual as a heroic autonomous entity that is said to exist somehow without recourse to others. In order to do this, as a part of the developing argument, the individual is embedded in the larger social context – i.e. the group. However, the group as such *never* exists in any straightforward way – it is *always* a problematic. Lavie quite rightly supports the notion of 'relational' individuals. That, however, does not go far enough either for Elias or for me.

All of Foulkes's innovations were the fruit of just one simple idea: that human beings can never be thought of in isolation as they always exist in relation to each other. He developed a series of concepts that attended to the level of individuals-in-relation, such as

the matrix and the social unconscious. Despite these innovations he did not take the final step, which was to consider individuals in power-relations to each other . . . It required Elias to breach this 'final frontier', of humans-in-social relations. Elias showed that hierarchical power relations between groups of people were intrinsic to the social and thus to the psyches of its inhabitants. (Dalal, 2002: 225)

The term 'social' is critical in that it is through this term that power enters the schema. To my mind, *this* is one of the fundamental differences between radical group-analytic theory and the philosophies of Mitchell and other relationalists: the abstract idea of relationality is not enough. The point is this: relationality takes place first, last and always in a socio-political context which permeates all levels of human existence, the family as well as the infant at the breast. This is the radical in Foulkes, in which the social comes to permeate the core. If one retains and retreats to an abstract notion of relationality per se, a relationality that floats in a sociological vacuum, then one renders it bland, and so allows group-analytic discourse to remain comfortable within the orthodox frame.

Note

1. Actually this is not quite true – he does allow the distinction between *Symbol Theory* (bad) and *Society of Individuals* (good) – but neglects to give reasons for his predilection.

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Reply to Farhad Dalal's Response

Joshua Lavie

Circles of Isolated Static Objects: Dalal Keeps Intact the Reification the Concept of 'Group'/'Society'

Farhad Dalal tells of the difficulty he experienced while starting to write his Response. He then shares with us his insight: 'my issue with Lavie is . . . why, mysteriously, Lavie portrays me as supporting the very idea that I have spent two books arguing against' (2005: 537).

Well, I really understand and can even empathize with Dalal's bewilderment leading to his difficulty, and I also think that he is absolutely right in his insight. Dalal spent a lot of effort to represent Elias, but in my view he dealt just with a fraction of Elias's breakthrough which created a new paradigm in sociology – the part which deals with 'Individualism' and the reification of 'the individual' and not with *both parts of the equation: individual and group*.

To quote from Elias's book *What Is Sociology?* (1978):

Looking through sociology textbooks one find many technical terms which convey the impression of referring to isolated and motionless objects; yet on closer scrutiny they refer to people who are or were constantly moving or constantly *relating* (my italics) to other people. . . . *The very concept of society* (my italics) has this character of an isolated object in a state of rest. The same goes for the *concept of the individual* (my italics). Consequently we always feel impelled to make quite senseless conceptual distinctions, like 'the individual *and* (italics in the original) society', which make it seem that 'the individual' and 'society' were two separate things, like tables and chairs, or pots and pans. . . . Yet on another level of awareness one may know perfectly well that societies are composed of individuals, and that individuals can only possess specifically human characteristics such as their ability to speak, think, and *love* (my italics), in and through their *relationships* (my italics) with other people – 'in society'. (p. 113)

Dalal, in his efforts to deconstruct 'the individual' and to embed him in the larger social context, the group, kept in practice and left intact the static reified concept of 'society' or 'group', hence undermining his efforts to place Elias's legacy as the foundation for his post-Foulkesian group-analytic theory. Dalal did this (1998:

160–171) by using arguments which focused on closed circles, representing groups of isolated motionless objects (which Elias warned us against), and not on open interdependent interrelational human beings and their relationships, figurations or networks, which are always in a flux.

In a recent book (Loyal and Quilley, 2004), the editors brought, in a nutshell, 'Elias's injunctions to sociologists' and I shall add (following Foulkes's legacy) injunctions for psychologists, also:

They should studiously avoid thinking either about single individuals, or about humanity and society, as static givens. The proper object of investigation should always be interdependent groups of individuals and the long-term transformation of the figurations that they form with each other. Human figurations are in a constant state of flux, in tandem with shifting patterns of the personality and habitus of individuals. (p. 5)

Surprisingly enough, if one takes Elias's new paradigm in its entirety one finds oneself in the domain of Foulkesian-Eliasian group-analytic theory. Yet, if one takes just a fraction of Elias's legacy, one finds oneself in the land of post-Foulkesian group-analytic theory. Ironically enough, however, Foulkes's and Elias's entire theories, combined and integrated together, seem to be more advanced and more relevant to therapeutic group analysis than post-Foulkesian theory. The prefix 'post' does not necessarily bring with it more advanced findings or theoretical innovations.

Fragmenting Elias's Findings and Distorting Lavie's Argument

Dalal claims that I did not bring enough citations to assist my argument, and that the title of his book is not a sufficient proof. Well, my article did not deal primarily with Dalal's whole book, but with his partial representation of Norbert Elias. To quote from *Taking the Group Seriously*:

- The work of constructing a group-analytic paradigm that proceeds from the *Group* . . . has already begun. For the purpose of the current project, not only does interpersonal psychoanalysis not go far enough, it begins in the wrong place, with the individual and not *the group*. (Dalal, 1998: 157; my italics)
- The most profound realization to emerge . . . that mind and

thought are not private properties of the *individual*, but properties of the *group*. (Dalal, 1998: 225; my italics)

- These remote philosophical cogitations have surprising bearing on the subject of this book – the relevance of *the group*. What this *philosophical argument* is doing is progressively embedding *the individual* in the larger social context, *the group*. (Dalal, 1998: 98; my italics)

Dalal's book was published in 1998, almost at the same time when a Special Section of *Group Analysis* was dedicated to 'The Centennial Celebration to Commemorate the Birth and Work of Norbert Elias', published in December 1997. Seven distinguished and knowledgeable writers (among them past students, colleagues and co-writers of Elias and Elias himself) contributed to this. I believe that if it had been possible for Dalal to have read this before writing his book, his partial work would have been broadened. He would have seen that Elias, by studying the *civilizing process* – which is a simultaneous study of (a) *the evolutionary process of generations of human beings evolving to be more and more interdependent and individualized within the very same process*, and (b) *the evolutionary process of generations of pluralities of interdependent human beings forming networks ascending in their complexity* (which we call 'modern societies') – criticized *both* concepts of 'society' and 'individual' as static reifications.

Let us take, for example, Eric Dunning's characterization of Norbert Elias's work and compare it to Dalal (1998: 98; quoted above).

Also involved in Elias's breakthrough is a stress on the observable fact that each human *individual is a process* and that humans, bound by more or less *fluid ties of interdependence*. That is, humans form *dynamic configurations* with each other (Elias, 1978: 13ff). Through this formulation, Elias succeeded in circumventing what *philosophically* (my italics) oriented sociologists call 'agency-structure dilemma' (Giddens, 1984), the difficulty philosophers and sociologists have had for centuries in coming up with formulations of 'individual-society' relationship which avoid reductionism and reification whilst *simultaneously doing justice to both sides of the equation*. (Dunning, 1997: 477–478; my italics)

Furthermore Dunning writes:

I like to think of Elias as sociology's equivalent to Copernicus. . . correcting what he called the *homo clausus* view of humans and replacing it with an

orientation towards *homines aperti*, pluralities of open people. (Dunning, 1997: 477–478; my italics)

Because of the difficulty we all have in assimilating Elias's Copernicusian revolution, due to the fact that our own self images (I-image and We-image) is imprinted with the reified images of '*the individual*' and '*the group*', let us also refer to Stephen Mennell, whose work Malcolm Pines described as –

The fullest exposition and appraisal of Elias is in the monograph by our distinguished contributor, Stephen Mennel, *Norbert Elias: Civilization and the Human Self-Image* (Blackwell, 1989). (Pines, 1997: 476)

Mennell (1997) writes in his article 'A Sociologist at the Outset of Group Analysis' –

Elias always considered himself as a *sociologist*, not a 'social theorist', and had a low estimate of the potential contribution of *philosophical reflection* (my italics) to the understanding of human society if it were divorced from the empirical investigation of human social interdependence. . . . Elias argued that the whole central tradition of modern Western epistemology, from Descartes through Kant to twentieth-century phenomenology, was misconceived. It was based on asking how a single, *adult* (italics in the original) human mind can know what it knows. Elias called this the model of *homo clausus* (italics in the original), the 'closed person', and found it lurking in much of modern sociology. He argued that we must instead think in terms of *homines aperti* (italics in the original), 'open people', and in particular of 'long chains of generations of people' building up the stock of human knowledge. His crucial point, however, was the image of *homo clausus* (italics in the original) corresponded to a *mode of self experience* (italics in the original) that was not a human universal but was a social product, particularly of European society from the Renaissance onwards. (pp. 491–492)

I quoted at length from Mennell, Dunning, and Elias himself, in order to demonstrate that the Eliasian breakthrough aimed to replace the old discourses that *both* reified and dichotomized 'society' and 'individual', and to create a new discourse which conceives the singular human being as a *relational-interdependent-individuated-person* and the pluralities of human beings as *complex networks of relational-interdependent-individuated-persons*. Note that the individual–group dichotomy was a product of the old discourses that reified *both* the *group* and the *individual*. That is to say, Elias's project was always a twofold one: first, he made multidisciplinary empirical investigations (psycho-socio-historical) leading to the conclusion that *both* concepts of '*Individual*' and '*Society*'/'*Group*'

became reified ‘twins’ in the course of the modern civilizing process while shaping unscientific images in the minds of modern people, and second, by this very conclusion the dichotomy automatically dissolves as a consequence of the disappearance of the static reifications.

Now, if we compare Dalal’s Response to my article to the quotations by Stephen Mennell and Eric Dunning, we see again his incomplete conception of Elias’s interdisciplinary enormous body of research. He writes: ‘As Lavie himself agrees, what Elias seeks to do is to undermine and dissolve the individual group dichotomy’ (2005: 538).

Again, this is very partially correct and it is Dalal’s agreement with himself – not with me and not with Elias! He writes: ‘What is clear is that Lavie wants to privilege the idea of the (relational) individual over the group’. He omits the ‘s’ (denoting pluralities) from the word ‘individual’ thus distorting the crux of my argument. In the very beginning of my article I write:

Norbert Elias and S.H. Foulkes took ‘modern individuals’ seriously and not ‘The Group’ as Farhad Dalal (1998) argues. Their legacy was to save individual human beings from twofold dangers: the ‘ritual of the *pristine individual*’ and the ‘worship of *groups*’, both characterizing different facets of modernity. (Lavie, 2005: 519)

I will say that I did not discuss the issue of individual–group dichotomy. My main aim was to show how Elias and Foulkes, from the outset of the foundation of group analysis, understood the group as ‘group of individuals’ and likewise society as ‘society of individuals’. It was a tremendous turn in thought, not to see the group primarily as a whole, a circle, but as a network, as webs of communication of the utmost complexity. And although Foulkes adopted the term ‘group analysis’ from Trigant Burrow, it was just a linguistic adoption. Every practising group analyst knows that most of the time he/she listens and works with individuals forming a flux of complex webs of communications between themselves. I would argue that Dalal’s accentuation of the concept of ‘*the group*’ is a retreat from the very essence of group analysis.

Dalal’s Philosophical Argumentation: Antithesis to Elias’s Work and Legacy

If one reads carefully Dalal’s *Taking the Group Seriously* (1998), one can see that the whole argumentation is a philosophical one.

Throughout the book we can find sentences beginning with 'logic dictates . . .' (e.g., p. 61). If so, Dalal based his thesis about post-Foulkesian group-analytic theory, on both a partial reading of Norbert Elias and on Matte-Blanco philosophy of logic. These philosophical reflections would have been a nightmare for Elias who fought against the 'dictatorship' of philosophical reflections which were divorced from the empirical investigation of human social interdependence (as can be seen from those extracts from Elias, Mennell and Dunning cited previously). Even if Dalal succeeded to dissolve the individual group dichotomy with his philosophical reflections and instruments, he actually left intact the very static reified concepts of *both* 'individual' and 'group'. His very last words in his book demonstrate it:

The Matte-Blanco tele-micro-scope, our new conceptual tool, allows us to see fluid unity where before there was dichotomy, and with these new possibilities we discover that we arrived in a post-Foulkesian land. And now it is truly possible to understand what Elias meant when he said that the *individual* (my italics) is a level of *group*. (Dalal, 1998: 228; my italics)

Here again, despite, or maybe because, of his new philosophical tool, Dalal left intact the 'individual' and 'group' reifications and their static conceptual status.

Are There Merely 'Power Structures' in the World? Or, Maybe Other Things Like 'Love and Learn' Relationships?

It seem to me that Dalal's efforts ended up in formulating a post-modern theory of group analysis based on power structures in the world (which appear to be based on post-modern social theorists like Michel Foucault). Towards the end of *Taking the Group Seriously*, Dalal writes, in a rare self-awareness, about the dead end which is the outcome of his philosophical reflections divorced from the empirical investigation of human social interdependence:

The project has almost dissolved the object of its study – almost, but not quite. We are rescued from infinite regresses and cognitive and discursive solipsisms by remembering the *power structures in the world*. (p. 226; my italics)

In relation to these words one can congratulate Dalal and say: 'Welcome back to the world! Yet, in doing so, please take a wide look at its variegations! It is not only power struggles which are out there!'

Nevertheless, I very much appreciate Dalal exactly on this point. He is one of the passionate fighters against power imbalance between groups and against racism during the last decade or so. He set the agenda for dealing with these urgent issues in various domains of human practice: political, social and professional. However, his excitement and enthusiasm to apply his discoveries and insights almost to every domain of human life, relationships and practice, is something that characterizes pioneers or vanguards in the midst of the battle, reducing almost everything to pursuit of their just goal.

I quote Earl Hopper's letter to the Editor of *Group Analysis* commenting on 'The Social Unconscious: A Post-Foulkesian Perspective' (Dalal, 2001):

We must not adopt an overly socialised model of man without instincts, drives, sensations, and physiology, not to mention passion, who is merely a figment of the imagination of powerful others. I would not like to be a patient of a group analyst who regarded people in this way. (Hopper, 2002: 334)

To elaborate on this issue let us refer to one of Elias's final scientific papers. Three years before his death, in the age of 90, he wrote 'On Human Beings and their Emotions: A Process-Sociological Essay' (1987, 1991). Elias emphasized the fact that, from birth on, humans not only *can* but *must* learn in order to become fully functioning human beings. He writes:

There are natural human structures which remain dispositions and cannot fully function unless they are stimulated by a person's '*love and learn*' relationship with other persons . . . the child has to learn from its elders through a relationship which involves affects and emotions as much as intellect, a *love-and-learn relationship*. (pp. 110–111)

He demonstrates his wide conception of human being as follows:

There is some evidence which suggests that some experience must be passed through, some type of knowledge learned by a person early in life, when the natural process of maturation creates as it were the strongest possible natural disposition for learning them. The capacity for speaking and for understanding a language is *one* . . . that of *loving and responding to love* (my italics) is *another*, the capacity of regulating oneself, according to learned social standards, of controlling ones drives and emotions, a *third*. (pp. 112)

So – if we adhere to Elias's legacy – there are not just power structure out there in the world to rescue us from infinite regress and discursive solipsisms.

What Has Really Happened to the Human Subject During the Evolution of Modern Western Civilization?

Three lines of investigation and discussion were held by scholars from different disciplines – historians, sociologists, philosophers, social theorists and psychoanalysts. Some explored the eternal gulf between individual and society and the ongoing struggle between them, some pointed at the problem of modern man putting himself as the jewel of the crown in the ritual of ‘individualism’, others criticized the reification and fossilization of the static concept of ‘the individual’. Ian Burkitt’s (1991) book, *Social Selves – Theories of the Social Formation of Personality*, is a comprehensive survey of these issues; especially the first chapter ‘Society and the Individual’ (pp. 1–27). We could have seen from the preceding discussion that Dalal’s philosophical discussions addressed these same issues.

Elias, although always referring and criticizing the above problems, started his empirical investigations and theoretical analysis in a more fundamental point. In his breakthrough and new paradigm, he was the first to pave the way to a totally different turn. He set a multidisciplinary research in which he studied actually the very process of ‘individualization’. Notice the word ‘individualization’ which denotes a process. In the second part of Elias’s book *The Society of Individuals* (1991), a part which Elias composed in the 1940s and 1950s – the years of his active participation in the foundation of the Group Analytic Society – he wrote a section entitled ‘Individualization in the Social Process’. In this section Elias writes:

What presents itself from one aspect as a process of increasing individualization is from another a process of civilization. . . . The possibility, like the necessity, of greater individualization is an aspect of social transformation which is quite beyond control of the individual. (p. 121)

What emerges in the process of civilization, Elias (1991: 121) writes –

. . . is the separateness and encapsulation of individuals *in their relations to each other*. (italics in original)

Smith (2001), in his book *Norbert Elias and Modern Social Theory*, writes:

This process of individualization cannot occur outside social relationships. People learn to say ‘I’ at the same time as they learn to say ‘we’. (p. 42)

So, Elias didn't stop at just criticizing and deconstructing the modern self-image and mode of self-experience, but went further and deeper with his empirical investigations of the simultaneous process of individualization and socialization which lies at the heart of the *civilizing process*. For Elias, this was a real scientific socio-psychological piece of work. It gives human beings not just philosophical tools for critical reasoning and deconstruction, but first and foremost scientific empirical tools for dealing with individuals and groups of individuals, such as being done, for example, in the practice of group analysis.

In my article I quoted at length from Dennis Brown's conversation with Norbert Elias (Brown, 1997: 518–520). There, Elias emphasized time and again the very idea that the *civilizing process implies that the individual is thoroughly socialized and individualized at the same time* (my italics). This tenet lies at the heart of group analytic psychotherapy. From Elias's point of view this was his and Foulkes's fundamental principle which gave Foulkes the legitimation of putting people in groups for their own personal therapy. There, in the group, they can heal themselves and develop through a process of individualization and socialization at the same time. It seems paradoxical and sometime an absurdity to every new patient to believe that he could individualize while socializing with other people; but isn't that the essence of group analysis?

In his Response to my article Dalal writes: 'A lengthy part of Lavie's article consists of a direct quote of a conversation that Dennis Brown had with Elias, he cites this at length to make the point that Elias did not disavow Freud . . .' (2005: 556)

In fact, my main reasons were: (a) the simultaneous processes of individualization and socialization in the process of personal and social of development; and (b) the equal weight which is given to the individual level and the group level in group-analytic therapy.

A final word about individualization. In his book *Time: An Essay*, Elias (1992) even put the issue of individualization on his head. He claimed that society itself went through a process of individualization. The social need for timing was much more acute and pervasive in modern societies, where many long chains of interdependence intersect within the individual, requiring constant awareness of time in the coordination of numerous activities. This evolution required the individualization of social time-control, which bears all the hallmarks of a civilizing process (we can also see it in the progressive development of the personal watch).

A Personal Reference to Dalal's Analysis of My Apparent Motives and Hidden Agenda

The final word will be personal. In his response to my article, Farhad Dalal is analysing me and my apparent hidden motives and agenda. I wrote this article as a derivative of five years of doctoral research in 'The Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas', which is an interdisciplinary institute affiliated to the schools of history, philosophy and culture in Tel-Aviv University. These studies guided me naturally to the Archives of Foulkes in London and Elias in Germany. However, I am also a senior clinical psychologist for many years and a graduate of the Diploma Course in the Israeli Institute of Group Analysis. I believe that if I were just an academic, I would probably be frightened by such 'personal analysis', but being also a therapist I can comprehend Dalal's distress leading him to such responses. Nevertheless, the intellectual 'fight' is always open and holds in his store potentials for real development and innovations in theory and practice. In spite of that, I hope we can meet and discuss these crucial issues in the future. This polemic is sure 'hot'! Yet, its just because the subject matters are hot, and we need many more hours of exploration and discussion.

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Response to Reply by Joshua Lavie

Farhad Dalal

It seems to me that Lavie is conflating two different kinds of thinking, the conceptual and (for the want of a better term) the practical.

First, at the *conceptual* level, I concur with Elias that it is a mistake to think of the individuals and groups as two different *kinds* of phenomena, said to be existing at two different 'levels' and interpenetrating each other. At the conceptual level the individual is not prior to the social group and *vice versa*. The individual forms the group even as the individual is formed by it in the same moment. It seems to me that Lavie is seeking to retain the division between the individual and the group at the conceptual level, and doing so in a way that is privileging the *idea* of the individual over the *idea* of the group.

Second, at the practical level, each of us, as *particular* individuals, is born into pre-existing societies constituted by a multiplicity of overlapping and conflicting cultures. The cultures themselves as well as the relationships between cultures are constituted by power relationships. As each of us 'grows', each of us of necessity imbibes the pre-existing cultural forms, habits, beliefs and ways of thinking that we are born into. These introjections are not taken into a pre-existing self, rather they come to actually *contribute* to the formation the self. It is in this sense, in

the actual developmental history of each individual that the particular group *is greater than and prior to* the particular individual. If this is Lavie's charge against me, then I am happy to accept it.

To think in this way does not, to my mind, mean that one is denying the existence of individuals each with their individual histories and *unique* sense of self, or denying that they are biological beings in bodies.

As for power, Lavie says in his response that there is more to life than power. No doubt there is, but power relations are always part of it. To my way of thinking, power is integral to, and an inescapable aspect of all human relationships, including love relationships. And it is so because of the fact that as human beings we are interdependent. Interdependence is another name for 'function' or 'need'. To say that person 'A' has a function for person 'B', is to say that 'B' needs 'A'. It is always the case that the reverse will also be true in some way, and so the relationship between 'A' and 'B' is interdependent even while it is asymmetric. 'A' constrains 'B' and vice versa; it is these kinds of enabling constraints that are described as power relations.

Finally, Lavie says that my Response consists of a personal analysis of him and his motivations. I specifically did not do this. I limited myself to analysing the *forms of argument* that he used (not his person), and proposed various thoughts about some of the strategic reasons and outcomes for those forms of argument.

For the rest, I am content to let other things be and let readers come to their own conclusions.