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AN ELABORATION OF BION'S GROUP THEORY

by

Monica Carsky

**A dissertation submitted to the
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INTRODUCTION

The importance of Bion's ideas about group process (1952, 1959a; Rioch, 1970) is recognized by many authors in the small group field (e.g., Gibbard and Hartman, 1973; Mills, 1967; Scheidlinger, 1960, 1968, 1974; Slater, 1966; Yalom, 1975), and Bion's concepts have been one source for an orientation for clinical work with groups which originated at the Tavistock Clinic in London. A "Tavistock" group meets to study group processes and authority relations as they occur within the group itself, with the aid of a consultant who makes group-level interpretations about these processes. The consultant utilizes Bion's ideas and the work of A.K. Rice (1965, 1969; Miller and Rice, 1967) on open systems to illuminate these issues for members' learning. This approach, combining Bion and Rice, is also used in organizational consulting to identify and conceptualize covert factors which may be interfering with the functioning of an institution, and to plan interventions (e.g., Kernberg, 1973, 1975b; Klein and Gould, 1973; Menzies, 1960; Miller and Gwynne, 1972). For a time, Bion used his understanding of group process and the dynamics of individual participation in groups to do group therapy. He believed that the group-level work and interpretations would benefit individual patients in the groups. More generally, the understanding of group process as an inevitable part of group psychotherapy has been enriched by awareness of the aspects of group life to which Bion drew attention.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm with which some of Bion's concepts have been adopted, only a few attempts have been made to organize and

elaborate his outline of a group theory, and these have dealt mainly with relatively discrete ideas. Most popular has been the concept that groups have a covert or unconscious "basic assumption" life, where members can be viewed as acting as if they had made one of several assumptions about the true purpose of the group: it has met so a leader can take care of members, lead them into battle against an opposing group or concept, or lead them in avoiding work or some perceived enemy, or the group's main purpose is to reproduce itself in some perfected form, complete with messiah or utopia. Each assumption can be used as a rubric to organize characteristic fantasies or wishes expressed in the group, and characteristic emotions and activity styles. Slater (1966) recast the basic assumption concepts into a developmental schema for small groups, which has been used by Gibbard and Hartman (1973; Hartman and Gibbard, 1974a, b; Gibbard, 1974) to study and conceptualize the concerns with individual and group boundary maintenance which Slater proposed as a way to classify the basic assumptions. Stock and Thelen (1958) based some research on member personality differences, and subsequent histories of small task and training groups, on Bion's idea of valency, the preference an individual has for making use of a particular group basic assumption. In papers on systems issues in hospital administration which apply Rice's work, Kernberg (1973, 1974, 1975b) alludes to the reactivation of very early self and object representations as part of the difficulty in effective leadership and responsible action in groups, and cites other material from Bion. Scheidlinger (1960) has also critically assessed Bion's contributions, from the viewpoint of psychoanalytic group psychotherapy.

It seemed to the present author, however, that another examination of some of Bion's key group concepts would be useful. One aim of this work is to transform some of the denseness of Bion's writing into richness, by

elaborating its theoretical contexts. Bion draws heavily on Klein, for example, and often alludes to her work in an abbreviated way. It is also illuminating to consider Bion's group ideas in the light of his other work on an account of the development of thinking (1953, 1956, 1959b, 1962a, 1962b) and his later attempt to describe a calculus and model for a theory of psychoanalysis (1963, 1965, 1967). Finally, some of Bion's ideas may be better understood when related to the work of other psychoanalytic group theorists who have been trying to articulate aspects of group process to which Bion directed attention.

The present work will focus on the intrapsychic relationship between the individual and the group, as exemplified in the processes of joining and participating. Initial discomfort in joining groups is widely experienced and recognized; Bion used the concept of psychotic anxiety (1952) to account for this phenomenon. Psychotic anxiety also affects participation by members, because basic assumption life in the group develops as a form of defense against psychotic anxiety. Psychotic anxiety and basic assumption life will be the concepts explored here, within the contexts noted above.

It will then be suggested that the crux of the psychotic anxiety Bion postulates is a fear of boundary loss, which arises during group membership for various reasons. This will be examined most closely for the case of an individual joining an unstructured group, where the processes Bion describes seem to be amplified. Integration of systems theory with Bion's ideas, as in the work of Miller and Rice, will provide one focus for examination of the boundary issue;^{*} a second will be based on the work of Slater, Hartman and Gibbard on ambivalence in groups.

^{*}Durkin (1972) and Kernberg (1973) have noted the parallel applications Rice suggests, though not in detail.

The assumption will be made that individuals, groups and institutions may be seen to have similar structural properties,^{*} which can be represented as elements of systems theory. The basic element is the concept of boundary,^{**} that is, that systems and entities are defined by their functional and structural boundaries. An implication of this is that management of boundary crossings, including transformation of boundaries, is a critical function.

^{*}Voyat (1976) has also used this assumption to discuss the development of an individual's system of cognition, and the system of interpersonal relations.

^{**}This is also the basis of a calculus developed by Spencer Brown (1969), which he has found to have interpretations in "the basic forms underlying linguistic, mathematical, physical, and biological science. . . ." (p. v). The fundamental operation in the arithmetic of this calculus is to draw a distinction.

PART I

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

BION'S ASSUMPTIONS

Before addressing Bion's description of the psychotic anxiety phenomenon, it will be useful to state some assumptions which are central to his work.

1. The group is necessary for individual human existence. Thus, a conflict between wishes for personal survival and gratification, and the survival and success of the group, is fundamental. This conflict is also stated individually in Bion's claim that a person "cannot satisfy any emotional drive without expression of its social component....his impulses... are at the same time narcissistic" (1959b, p. 309). Bion also believes that we have an innate group nature which requires basic assumption life for its exercise and gratification.

2. Bion accepts many of Klein's postulates. In particular, he assumes with Klein that some type of fantasy is active from birth, but his account of the beginnings of representational thought is more systematic. Despite this, however, Bion does not address the possibility of conflict-free functioning in any detail, nor does he systematically describe the general ego functions and adaptational processes which ego psychologists have tried to conceptualize.

Bion uses Klein's concept of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, and the latter is especially important in his description of the development of symbolic thinking. He also accepts the assumption that

there is some fundamental process which corresponds to Klein's (1946) description of projective identification. This refers to the idea that one can extrude impulses, ego functions, internal objects and parts of the self and then act as if one had really accomplished this. Introjective identification is the complementary operation for incorporations. As used by Bion and other Kleinians, the term refers to a function performed on a broader range of entities than is usually implied by the psychoanalytic term projection. Scheidtänger (1960), for example, has criticized Bion for indiscriminately grouping transferences, identifications, and object ties in the concept of projective identification. Kernberg (1966, 1976) has defined projective identification as a more primitive, less successful form of the defense of projection: after the impulse has been projected, the person still identifies with it and continues to feel a need for defense. This can take the form of fear of, or need to control, the object into which the impulse is felt to have been placed.

Since Bion clearly intends that something like a sense of personal responsibility can be subject to projective identification, and Kleinians also speak of the "projection" of good internal objects in this way, Kernberg's definition is too narrowly negative as given above. However, Kernberg does articulate the implication of fluidity which is often part of the Kleinian use of the term. The range of entities which are seen, from the Kleinian perspective, as suitable for projective identification, does suggest that this process has implications for transferences, identifications, and object ties. Bion has implied elsewhere than in his group writings, however (e.g., 1965), that projective identification and transference are not identical, and I believe he would say the same for object ties. In the present work, projective and introjective identifications will be used according to the Kleinian mode, and will include "projection"

and "introjection," respectively. "Projection" and "introjection" will also be used as they are by Kleinians, i.e. as synonyms for projective and introjective identification. "Primitive projective and introjective processes" will also refer to projective and introjective identifications.

Another postulate given by Klein which will be significant in the discussion of Bion's group work is the assertion that there is a "psychotic core" in everyone. This refers to the idea that there is an early developmental stage closely akin to what we define as psychosis, and that a psychotic part of the personality remains even after this stage is successfully traversed (Bion, 1953, 1956). Depending on situational factors, processes and fantasies from this part of the personality may reappear, even in normal persons. Success in passing this point in development depends on individual and environmental factors. It also demands the capacity to eventually replace splitting with integration, to trust that gratitude can overcome envy, and that reparation can compensate for hate (Klein, 1937).

3. Bion often alludes to individual, innate differences which are responsible at root for different outcomes whose stages and processes he is attempting to describe. As in many of his papers, these differences will not be discussed at length when they are referred to in the course of this work, but they will be stated here as evidence that Bion does not wholly ignore individual differences. However, he is more concerned with global distinctions than detailed accounts of the effects of the differences.

For the development of normal thinking and functioning, certain experiences must be tolerated and certain conditions must be met. For example, reality testing will develop only if there is sufficient frustration tolerance. Schizophrenia, and the dominance of the psychotic part of the personality, results from an interaction between environmental and personal

factors. The environmental factors would be provided in part by a mother who is unable to accept or respond to the child's projections and return them in a usable, less terrifying or simply overwhelming form (see chapter four), and thus is responsible for the appearance of frustration or aggression in the child. The personality factors are:

- (a) Preponderance of destructive impulses which turn even love to sadism;
- (b) A hatred of reality which extends to aspects of the psyche which deal with reality;
- (c) A hatred of internal reality, including awareness of it;
- (d) Precipitate and premature formation of part object relationships.

An infant with such characteristics (which seem to derive from the first, an excess of aggression) will develop a preponderance of splitting and fragmentation over integration of experience and part objects. At later stages seemingly ordinary neurotic mechanisms will appear, but the psychotic part of the personality will be more prominent, and intrude more, than in other non-borderline persons. It should be noted here that although Bion implies a continuum of pathology, derived substantially from experiences of frustration and frustration tolerance, he does not deal with the problem of locating points on the continuum except in a global way.

4. Although Bion uses terms with concrete referents, like container and contained, in discussing theoretical entities, he notes the difficulties such terms create. Their connotations contaminate the abstractions they are used to describe, and many fail to constantly remind the reader of the unique characteristics of the subject matter, human personality. Much psychological theorizing is done in mechanistic terms, for example, yet a

word such as "apparatus" or "mechanism" will always imply a model unsuitable for accurately conveying meaning "when life is an essential element in the meaning to be conveyed" (1963, p.44). We continue to use such terms for lack of better ones in common usage at this time, and because some of their associations and connotations are helpful, but this is an important caveat to bear in mind.

A final specification: psychosis will be defined here as a loss of consensual reality testing and sense of a reality shared with others or with oneself through one's past. The anxiety experience in a group rarely develops into a full-blown psychosis, although this can occur, but elements of psychosis seem to appear in some stressful groups, particularly unstructured groups. For example, perception of time or person may be distorted, without loss of assumptions about perception of space or the ability to return to better reality testing after the group ends. Also, whether or not there is a conscious awareness that one is losing some links to reality, psychotic mechanisms may become active without awareness, mechanisms such as primitive projection and splitting. One may also become aware of severe anxiety and feelings of unreality in a group. This will be the operational definition of psychotic anxiety used in this paper; it will not be assumed that members experiencing psychotic anxiety actually become psychotic. Klein calls the very early developmentally normal anxieties she describes (paranoid-schizoid and depressive anxiety), psychotic anxieties, and it is in this context that Bion uses the term.

The following is an anonymous first-hand account of an experience in an unstructured small group.

. . . Despite a certain number of years of personal treatment, I still remained unprepared for the powerfullness of the experience, and years later have only begun to sort out some of the threads that accounted for what I perceived to be going on. The group I was in was rather small, only

seven members. The group started in what was the usual way, with everyone asking other people's names. Somehow, the group of us who knew each other by being from the same institution were immediately perceived by the rest of the group as a solidly allied block--a fact which could not have been further from the truth. The beginning of the group for me was largely concerned with checking out the other people as to their physical attributes, ostensible intelligence etc., and comparing myself to them.

I used my knowledge of the Tavistock method of working in the beginning to defend against the experience (This, of course, didn't work for too long). But at least for some time I could content myself with feeling in control of the situation because it was going according to the book. The hostility I felt toward the consultants was largely muted by this. In addition, most of my anxiety was focused on my peers. I desperately wanted them to like me, or at least not to find me offensive. I had many somewhat paranoid thoughts that I wouldn't really fit in with this group. Therefore, out of a very real sense of fear, I was largely silent throughout the group. I felt terrified that someone was going to ask me to talk, or to express my emotions about what was going on. When people began to question the silent members, I had a very terrifying experience, which I can only describe as a mini-hallucination.

It was a very vivid image of a large beast sitting in the middle of the group--literally the beast of Yeat's Second Coming--an image of a devouring combined male-female animal, who could easily sweep us all into irrational behavior. It was close in intensity to experiences I had had on LSD, but I didn't have the comfort of knowing that I could blame this on a drug. For a short period of time, I felt totally out of touch with the conversation that was going on. In addition, my other tensions about being acceptable to these people continued. I didn't feel I could trust anyone with knowing what I thought was happening to me--that I was frightened that I was going to go crazy--thereby ruining a great future, and in general humiliating everyone and most of all myself.

Somehow, the session ended. I got myself out of the room and into a cab home, where I had a major anxiety attack and felt like I couldn't breathe. Later I was to find out that these experiences are not so uncommon, that everyone feels anxious in these groups. But at the time, it was like I was experiencing something, within a group of hostile strangers, and there was no one I could tell about it. All my hostility toward them was projected, and I felt I had to get away from them and protect myself with solitude and withdrawal. Incidentally, this group made very clear to me the nature of my own non-participation in groups, and

my fears of joining in and getting lost in them. Somehow the issue of my individuality within a group remained paramount for me. At one point in the session, the image of fucking with the group was suggested. Some took it as a metaphor for sexual feelings in the group, others for an aggressive image like "don't fuck with me", but for me it was an image of losing yourself. In some ways I wanted to merge with the group, to be like them or how I imagined them to be, but I also wanted to be recognized and liked for being me (which I felt was different and alien from them). Actually saying this to them was an act of courage for me. In some ways I felt that wanting to be different itself was an anathema. But the whole dilemma somehow helped me to understand why I have always had an in-out relationship with groups. I see them as inherently dangerous to my identity, because of my own wish to merge with them.

Other notable things about the experience--the anxiety. I remember sitting for an hour and a half at a stretch with sweat dripping down the side of my body. Also feeling that I was being smothered. And eating an incredible amount during the breaks--literally stuffing bunches of cookies and donuts down my throat in a desperate attempt to stuff down some anxiety with it.

The model of groups which states that what is going on is largely an Oedipal dilemma within groups, with the consultant being the owner of the women in the group, did not really speak to my experience at the time. Perhaps if the group had lasted longer, I could have gotten in touch more with my feelings about the male consultant. People in the group did express desire for him, and a number of the males felt jealous of him. My own reaction was one of indifference, but this is open to the obvious interpretation of defense. But in fact, I think my experience was much more one centered around the dilemmas of joining and making contact with the group--mother--the giver or withholder of approval and love, and thus a connection with reality.

Again, it was very hard for me to see the other individuals as differentiated human beings. At times they looked like a mass of faces, at other times their faces seemed distorted, almost grotesque. I was struck by my own loss of person constancy and how much my emotional reading of a person influenced their physical appearance to me. Also, there was a lot of stuff about myself that I didn't like, e.g., that I would have been willing to scapegoat other people just so that I would not be the one attacked by the group. Very strong feelings at certain times of contempt for the other members who were perceived to be "out of it." A very real perception of the power axis of the group at any given time, and a sense that my feelings toward people would switch according to how I perceived the group felt about them.

Lastly, what the hell was the task, anyway. Somehow

I thought if I could figure out what the task was I could get myself out of this frightening mess. But after a while task just seemed like a word which sounded funny and had no meaning whatsoever. Also, my sense of time completely warped out. Things went very slowly, I felt tortured by being in the group--other times I felt elated, almost manic--time was rushing by very quickly. Words started to sound funny--an unusual number of clang associations occurred to me. All this while I was desperately trying to maintain a veneer of adult control. I was facing the mirror. My own face started to look warped, crazy and ugly. I decided not to sit facing the mirror anymore. Looking for a good kind mother--but this could only be judged by the way people dressed, the colors they wore, etc.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OUTLINE OF BION'S ACCOUNT OF GROUP LIFE

Bion states that the person initially fails at the complex task of establishing "contact with the emotional life of the group in which he lives. . . ." (1952, p. 440). The task creates anxiety and results in regression, a prominent feature of which is the belief that a "group" exists, rather than merely an aggregate of individuals. This aspect of the regression also implies a process of de-individuation through a felt loss of one's distinctiveness in the group. Attempts to deal rationally and realistically with the group experience provoke psychotic anxiety because the aggregate, as a complex whole which is the object of inquiry for the person trying to cope with it, "approximates too closely, in the minds of the individuals composing it, to very primitive phantasies about the contents of the mother's body" (p. 456). Attempts to join in the life and work of the group, therefore, are interrupted repeatedly by impulses, fears, and defenses related to these phantasies.* The major defense against this psychotic anxiety is basic assumption activity, which is the tendency of group members to behave as if they shared one of several emotion laden, drive-related assumptions about the purpose of the group: it is to gratify dependency

*Kleinians use the term "phantasy" rather loosely (see chapter three); here it will refer to unconscious fantasy, and "fantasy" will refer to fantasies which are not necessarily unconscious.

needs, to join forces to fight or flee a common enemy, or it is to reproduce something of itself in a perfect, unconflicted, immortal form.

Basic assumption activity is intended to serve as a defense against psychotic anxiety resulting from attempts to rationally explore group phenomena or to work at the group's task. But basic assumption activity may itself cause an increase in this anxiety. Utilization of part-object relations and primitive defenses (splitting, and primitive forms of introjection and projection (Kernberg, 1966)) is fundamental to basic assumption life, and these activities can remind group members of the primitive part objects which are associated with the mother, or of fantasied "bizarre primal scenes" composed of these parts. Since, according to Bion, this is a major source of psychotic anxiety, further defensive measures are required, for example, successive changes in the basic assumption being employed.

In individual members, basic assumption activity refers to shared defensive thoughts, feelings and unconscious fantasies, rather than shared perceptions of reality. There is no awareness of the passage of time, and development, or learning from experience, does not occur. The individual is required only to share the assumption and the "increase in a pleasureable feeling of vitality" (p.453) which results from this. Basic assumption mentality alone cannot be translated into overt behavior, since acting on the world requires appropriate contact with reality, which is found only to the degree that the "work group function," concerned with the conscious task of the group and obstacles to that task, is available. Thus, group activity will consist of mixtures of basic assumption and work group functioning, with the proportions varying.

A further factor in defending against the anxiety experienced

in groups is the degree of structure in the group. Less structured groups and organizations seem more susceptible to use of basic assumptions to control psychotic anxiety; procedures, conventions and so forth seem to support more mature individual functioning, at least initially.

Along with reference to Klein's descriptions of early defensive operations, Bion uses many of her formulations about fantasy, symbolism, and early infantile sadism (Klein, 1930a, 1930b, 1946, 1963). According to Klein, the child who has projected his own oral-sadistic impulse to attack and destroy the mother onto the part objects which he or she imagines comprise the mother, fears retaliation. This fear of retaliation from the part objects leads the infant to equate them with other things to escape his or her dread, in the beginning of symbolism. Replacement of these by new symbols remains necessary, however, as each symbol in turn may become a source of anxiety. The child's relationship to reality at this stage is fantastic, as much of reality may be imbued with anxiety due to this process, and the child does not have a complete understanding of the difference between a symbol and the thing symbolized. According to Bion, the group, which is composed of many different, separate objects, tends to recreate this sense of being surrounded by dreaded part objects. The anxiety felt by an adult entering a group thus stems from the early projective mechanisms described by Klein. One could hypothesize, then, that group members unconsciously equate present group members, or aspects of present group experience, with part object representations of an early mother image. The group as a whole will be equated with the frightening mother image composed of part objects.

Topics to be considered in the following chapters of Part I include the nature of symbolism and fantasy according to Klein, and Bion's ideas on the development of thinking, reality testing and psychosis, which will eventually be related to basic assumption life. The first discussion will focus on Klein.

CHAPTER THREE

KLEIN: FANTASY AND SYMBOLISM

Fantasy

In referring to primitive fantasies about the contents of the mother's body, Bion is relying on Klein's account of early infantile fantasy and the development of symbolism, and representation. The present discussion of Klein's position refers to Isaac's (1952) paper on fantasy, which Klein accepted, as well as to Klein's own papers.

Klein (1936, 1952) believes that fantasy is active from birth. Every stimulus is responded to in part by fantasies either painful or pleasant. Fantasies are rooted in the instincts, or are the expressions of both the life and death instincts. As Isaacs expresses it,

Fantasy is (in the first instance) the mental corollary, the psychic representative of instinct. There is no impulse, no instinctual urge or response which is not experienced as unconscious fantasy....A fantasy represents the particular contents of the urges or feelings (for example, wishes, fears, anxieties, triumphs, love or sorrow) dominating the mind at the moment (p. 83; quoted in Klein, 1959, p. 251).

Fantasies are thus defined as closely related to instincts, as mental representations of the situation which would gratify the impulse. Fantasies are also mental responses to every stimulus. Included in this definition are hallucinations and imaginative thinking; memory traces also provide images which may be used in fantasies. Isaacs states that early fantasies are nonverbal but have some type of meaning without words, and may be viscerally experienced, or include visceral experience. The

term "phantasy" is sometimes intended to refer only to unconscious fantasies, although the definition given seems intended to cover all of the infant's mental life.

The assumption that fantasy is active from birth is based on two considerations. One is that an instinct is a borderline psychosomatic process, as Freud (1915) sometimes defined it, and its mental aspect is fantasy. Thus, since instinctual impulses are present from birth, fantasies must also be present. The other point is that there is genetic continuity in development for other areas of psychological functioning, and so, since we can see the later elements in the fantasy behavior series, we can assume that their predecessors begin much earlier, with instinctual impulses, and the later behaviors such as dreams do not arise suddenly (Isaacs, 1952; Segal, 1964).

When Isaacs states that all impulses are experienced as unconscious fantasy, she is apparently utilizing the idea that instinct is a borderline concept as defined above. It is possible to see how this could be applied to some impulses, but less clear how a hungry infant could experience his or her hunger as fantasy. However, Isaacs has also postulated that early fantasy is particularly characterized by what Freud termed the primary process, so that an experience of "not being fed" is not an emptiness or lack, but a positive, painful experience--dissatisfaction, loss or deprivation have vectors with magnitude of their own, as it were, rather than being simply omissions of some positively valued experience. This can account for the bad (not feeding) breast or bad mother fantasy (that is, they are vectors with magnitude of their own), but what of the sensation of hunger itself without the implication of bad breast or bad mother? The Kleinian position would probably be

that this is not possible--the infant would be aware of some lack, some missing pleasurable state (even of homeostasis) which could be used to form the type of primitive representation outlined above. In fact, Klein (1936) even takes the position that the infant has an ontogenetic knowledge of the existence of the breast which might satisfy its hunger. It doesn't seem necessary to postulate this; the fantasy of longing could be directed at any previously known pleasurable state; of being fed, of intranterine existence, etc. The fantasy would become more precise with experience and maturation.

Other primary process characteristics of fantasy include its omnipotent quality, so that the wishes expressed in fantasy are experienced as accomplished. This is due to the overwhelming character which desires and feelings have at times, and lessens in later development. That is, the wish and the deed are more accurately differentiated later, although the intensity of momentary desire, and, presumably, development of the ego, reality relations, and reality testing, remain the factors which determine the occurrence of dedifferentiation.

One of the points Klein's description of early mental life stresses is that there is meaning of some sort this early, which is part of a continuum with later life and more sophisticated use of verbal thought and symbols. Klein has been criticized for this ascription of meaning to the young infant's mental processes (e.g., Glover, 1945), but Klein's definition need not be read as imputing an adult level of meaning, with awareness of representation, and secondary process manipulation, to the infant. Rather, there are personal or personalized mental contents derived from the infant's experiences, especially bodily ones, which are ongoing and repeated.

Klein also looks at the use of fantasies, not merely their reactive character or association with instinctual impulses. At first, fantasies are used mainly for wish-fulfillment of impulses, but later they become methods of defense against impulses, and, one must assume, against certain undesirable types of fantasies. The fantasies functioning as defenses do so by contents referring to omnipotent control, inhibition, reparation, denial and so forth.

There is another set of "uses" of fantasy which overlaps that noted above but which has some special attention given it in Klein's history of psychic development. The important processes of splitting, and introjection and projection, are fantasy activities; for example, one has a fantasy that one has split or kept aspects of an object apart (Klein, 1946, 1959). While Isaacs is certainly guilty of Glover's accusation that Kleinians sometimes mistake metaphor for literal truth, and while Klein herself sometimes says that fantasies merely "underlie" the processes of introjection and projection (1952), she does make the above statement and it is possible to organize this aspect of her work in these terms. To say that introjection and projection are fantasies of incorporation and expulsion, respectively, however, is not to minimize their real effects. For example, the fantasy that one has expelled libido into another object, and then incorporated that object, results in the fantasy of a good object inside one. When the process is repeated with variations there develops a fantasy of an internal world, which engenders a variety of subjective experiences and further primitive introjections, projections, splitting, and other fantasies. Though the fantasy is not an external or bodily reality, its effects are real in the experience of the subject, and lead to different types of actions, emotions, expressions of impulse, fantasies and ego development.

Isaacs does suggest yet another view of the theoretical relationship between the term "phantasy" and the process of introjection, taken as an illustration for all these mechanisms. She states that a fantasy of incorporation is the subjective experience one has of the functioning of introjection (p. 104). This claim leads to examination of questions regarding the mind's model of itself. The position outlined above as one reading of Klein, which matches Schafer's (1968a) account of introjection in some fundamental respects, can be taken to be a model for mental processes which we choose to use for a number of reasons, one of which is its easy reference to actual experiences of oral incorporation as metaphors to illuminate the model. It usefully reflects a pervasive human tendency to employ the body as a paradigm (Isaacs describes some defense mechanisms in these terms, and Schafer [1968b] discusses this approach from another perspective, as well as listing reasons for the proclivity to think about mental activities this way [1968a]). The first alternative assumes that fantasy activity is a process which may be used as a model for a process less directly known to exist (e.g. introjection or projection); the second alternative which Isaacs proposes seems to assume something called introjection as a real process in the mind, with fantasies of incorporation the accompanying mental contents we experience. The first alternative seems more desirable in terms of theoretical clarity, and the second is not required for Klein's system, so it will not be used here, but the issues briefly sketched in this connection will recur in consideration of Bion's ideas about thinking.

As noted, Klein and Isaacs are aware that the degree of de-differentiation between wish and act varies according to the intensity of the desire, and the degree of ego development. Isaacs outlines some

stages in the realization that a mental representation implicitly thought of as "in the mind" differs from the idea that there is a concrete object inside one. Here again it is difficult to be certain Isaacs is referring only to unconscious fantasy, because the account seems to be a brief sketch of the development of representational or symbolic thinking, which goes through the phases she lists:

- (a) Actual oral incorporation experiences of taking things in through swallowing;
- (b) Concrete fantasy with images not differentiated or scarcely differentiated from sensations and perceptions;
- (c) Some visual images, often still confused with perceptions, are linked with somatic responses;
- (d) "Concrete bodily elements in the total experience of perceiving (and phantasying) largely undergo repression" p. 104). Now visual images and perceptions are dominant and separated from physical experiences, and become representations of external objects acknowledged as such.

The final point in this series, though divorced from somatic representations and fantasies, is influenced by its past. Isaacs believes that even these images, which seem to be merely mental representations of real things, have effects in mental life derived from their somatic history and the fantasies which preceded them. Thus, a thought about "taking in" a book by reading it, or even such an action, may have effects or vicissitudes based on its related fantasies of oral incorporation and their connotations.

Notice that the progress in this series implicitly subsumes several broad areas, not only the types of fantasy formation, but the development of the symbolic process and awareness that representations are just that, and thus the development of some kind of reality testing. Clearly, some of these processes also involve consciousness.

Kleinians have been criticized by ego psychologists for failing to adequately account for the development of structures which are responsible for defensive and adaptive functions. In Klein's system,

some of these, like defensive functions, seem to be performed by fantasies (Ellman, 1977). One must then explain the tendency to act on the fantasy (for how long and how intensively) in a given situation, or to experience the setting in terms of the fantasy.

Some of this seems to be given over to innate individual differences: for Bion the ability to tolerate frustration is an important determinant of the development of reality testing. There seems to be an assumption that without abnormally low frustration tolerance, or other traumatic inner and outer conditions, maturation includes the advance of reality testing and object relations, and structures.

Kernberg (1976) has addressed these problems in order to utilize other aspects of Kleinian theory which seem valuable. This is done through a careful consideration of the broader meanings which early fantasy may have, and through an outline of how fantasies could be related to structures.

In dealing with the Kleinian assumption that fantasy is active from birth, it is possible to emphasize that portion of the definition of fantasy which is closest to accounts given by other researchers studying very young children, for example, Piaget (e.g., 1929, 1951), and Escalona (1968). That is, that very early fantasy may actually be memory traces of physical actions, or sensorimotor schemas. As noted earlier, Klein stresses the physical and sensory aspects of the earliest fantasies. Early fantasy could then be taken to mean that there are personal mental, neurophysiological activities associated with the infant's experiences.

For example, instincts could be expressed through physical actions and reflexes and fantasies would be the accompanying psychic activity: awareness of patterns, development of sensorimotor schemas,

and expectations of certain responses, expressed in physical and emotional set or readiness.

P. Kernberg (1976) relates the development of a representational world to Escalona's (1968) concept of patterns of concrete experience, and believes that this is what Kleinians mean by early fantasy. The pattern of concrete experience is

the accumulation of sensations, body feelings, and affective states that the infant experiences and the manner in which fluctuations in awareness are linked to perceptual input. During the first few months of life, the particular juxtaposition of subjective states, and its perceptual concomitants, lead to the emergence of recognition, anticipations, memories and the like. [Kernberg adds] . . . in this beginning emergence of recognition and memories, the representational world of self and object images linked by affects is starting to be built (P. Kernberg, 1976, p. 6).

In O. Kernberg's view of introjection, what are internalized to form the internal object world are not simply good or bad objects. The relationship one has with a given object is internalized, forming a constellation consisting of a self image, an object image, and an affect or drive derivative which represent a particular object or part object relationship. These constellations are gradually depersonified and integrated (by some maturational function, or by the ego once it develops, we must assume) into ego and superego structures. At earlier points in this transformation, the results of such introjections are structures which Kernberg calls introjects. However, Kernberg stresses that there are never "free floating" internal objects as implied by Klein; these are always part of a configuration of self and object representations and affect, or of an ego structure.

The self-object-affect images are first experiences put into a common memory trace, experiences of the environment and associated perceptions as well as the state of the organism and the self representation

at the time. Self-object-affect confluences are also organizers of inborn behavior and affect dispositions, discharge mechanisms (e.g., reflexes), innate perceptual patterns and nonspecific arousal mechanisms (Kernberg, 1966, 1976). These are in turn organized into psychic structures. This is consistent with Klein's view that fantasies can affect structures; for example, the fantasy of a good object taken inside one may serve to organize representations of the self as good along with feelings of security and self-confidence. In Kernberg's terms, the fantasy would be translated as the following: self--a representation of the self as good and gratified; object--a representation of the mother or other good object in a security-providing role; affect--gratification and comfortable control of the gratifying object, with confidence that the state will continue to be available.

The relationship between fantasy and structure may be hypothesized in several different ways. One would be to assume that psychic structures develop out of some inborn predispositions, and their existence makes the creation of fantasy possible. This seems to be the position Arlow (1961) takes:

Unconscious fantasy thinking is one level of the ego's integration of the instinctual demands of the id. Its cathectic potential is active at all moments of the individual's life, with the possible exception of deep narcosis or dreamless sleep. The intrusion of unconscious fantasy thinking into conscious mental experience is well known to us from the study of hallucinations, dreams and daydreams. More recent investigation has shown how this tendency plays a role in the structuring of perception and in the interpretation of external reality (p. 376).

According to Arlow, the ego has an "unconscious fantasy function" which seeks to intrude on the neutral process of checking the data of perception, in order to achieve discharge when suitable material for misperception or idiosyncratic interpretation of the world arises. Thus, structures like the ego are primary, but the fantasy activity of the ego can

affect other ego functions like perception.

Another possible relationship between fantasy and structure is implied by Klein. Klein seems to assume the gradual development of an ego, and speaks of this early ego's ability to withstand anxiety, for example. However, fantasy is also present from birth, and an ego function like perception or thinking is bound up with accompanying fantasies about its meaning from the start. In addition, some early fantasies are very similar to perceptions or memories, which may be used to create fantasies. Fantasies and structures might also be said to reciprocally influence one another. Klein hypothesizes that the ego is responsible for introjection, resulting in good internal objects, but that it then uses these for further ego development--development of ego structures and functions. Her assumption of the early development of a superego is best defined as the assumption of a special type of internalized object which takes on a special function in a poorly integrated way; the idea of a superego as classically defined being present in the first year or two of life is unrealistic.

Kernberg's position on the relationship between structures and fantasies combines the two described above. He specifies that primitive ego nuclei, especially in the form of primary autonomous functions, are present from birth, along with a function which makes introjection possible. Ego nuclei are consolidated as integration overcomes the primitive splitting which is normal early in life, through a sort of maturational process, it would seem. Kernberg suggests that the ego, as a differentiated psychic structure in the sense of Freud's description (1923), comes about at the point when introjections are used for defensive purposes, specifically in an early defensive organization against overwhelming anxiety (Kernberg, 1976, p. 35). ~~Then~~ splitting is

used defensively, and is not merely a lack of integrative capacity.

Kernberg's theory of countertransference (1975, 1976) and his translations of Bion (1973) assume that even the primitive self-object-affect constellations continue to exist (Ellman, 1977). Simultaneously, their more abstract descendants, which form the ego ideal, for example, develop. This means that the primitive versions may be evoked in situations of stress, in unstructured small groups, in the early sessions of the psychoanalysis of a neurotic person, and in reactions to relatively severely disturbed persons. In borderline or psychotic persons they are activated in a broader range of situations. The self-object-affect constellations include fantasies in their organization, even early fantasy, and then the self-object-affect units are themselves organized into structures like the ego ideal, or the ego (when combined with ego nuclei and autonomous apparatuses). Thus, in this position it is possible to have fantasies affecting structures as well as functions like perception. Fantasies are active in this way early in development to affect structures; the evocation of primitive self-object-affect units in later situations implies that fantasies influence the assessment and perception of the new experience when they are evoked. In contrast to the position Arlow represents, this account does not explain fantasy as simply one of many functions of the differentiated ego. Rather, it must be a function present from birth in some primitive state, which contributes to the building of structures, a view which goes with Klein's. However, along with claiming fantasy is present from birth, one must assume a function responsible for it, perhaps one of the "ego nuclei." Such a position stresses the importance of meaning and fantasy in the development of personality and of other ego functions, which is one of the appeals of Klein's work.

However, there is a problem in usage which arises in consideration of these positions. It has been suggested that Klein may be read as stating that introjection, and primitive projective identification, are fantasies about incorporation and expulsion which give rise to different fantasies about their results (as in Schafer's [1968a] view). However, Kernberg takes the position that the term introjection refers to a real mental process derived from primary autonomous apparatuses of perception and memory, not from oral incorporation fantasies, although they occur also. In line with his definition of introjection as an actual process rather than a theoretical construct, Kernberg uses the concept self-object-affect unit to refer to an actual entity, a type of organizer in the mind, perhaps a special type of memory trace. Self-object-affect units are then combined into psychic structures like a unitary self representation, ego ideal, character structures--terms which also have been assumed to be theoretical constructs rather than actual entities. This shift in levels, from actual entities (the self-object-affect units) to theoretical terms (ego, ego ideal), is a source of confusion, but I believe it can be resolved. The self-object-affect unit could refer to a theoretical construct as well as to an entity of some type. This entity could consist of certain observed behaviors, subjective experiences and fantasies which were conscious or able to become conscious under special conditions, e.g., during psychoanalysis. Similarly, the term fantasy would have to refer both to a theoretical term, and to the subjective experiences people report. Introjection would be a theoretical term for a process which seems to be a particular type of fantasy (in both meanings of fantasy).

Symbolism

One might ask why the fantasizing, sometimes hallucinating infant

ever comes to have a relationship with reality. Freud's (1915) answer was that the drives were not ultimately satisfied by hallucinations of gratification, and that this same frustration led to the infant's initial discovery of the difference between inner and outer stimulation. Isaacs agrees that the hallucination will eventually prove disappointing so that one must turn to the external world, presumably because it is the only other option for survival, but she doesn't seem to think this is enough: she feels that the postponement of satisfaction entailed in learning and thinking about the external world must satisfy some of the impulses represented in the fantasies, i.e., that learning depends on curiosity as well as desire and fear. Klein is more direct: she says there is an epistemophilic impulse which arises late in the oral period (1928, 1930a, 1932b). This refers to a developing desire for knowledge. This appears with the early stages of Oedipal tendencies and includes sexual curiosity as well as more general questions about the parental relationship as it affects the child. The inevitable sense of ignorance the child has at this stage is associated with feelings of impotence, frustration and weakness which are also implied by the Oedipal situation.

The epistemophilic impulse is initially directed at the mother's body, which is fantasized to be the scene of all sexual processes. Klein takes this impulse to arise at approximately the same time as a period of intense sadism is in effect. The infant thus wishes to explore the mother's body and also to take possession of it. Knowing the mother may be accompanied by fantasies of concrete possession, oral incorporation, or omnipotent control of the contents of her body. Klein (1928) adds that the curiosity and sadistic possession, intimately connected during this period, are also associated with guilt from incipient Oedipal tendencies.

Part of Klein's reason for the assumption of a period of intense sadism is her more fundamental belief in the existence of a death instinct operative from birth, which is deflected or projected outwards onto other objects. These are then experienced or internalized as bad, persecutory, anxiety-producing and/or frustrating objects. Early envy of the good objects outside oneself, for their goodness, even if one shares in this goodness, is another Kleinian assumption (1957). Without stipulating an innate knowledge of a death instinct, or the existence of such an instinct, one might more tenably postulate a tendency to respond to deprivation or frustration with aggression, or, here, with aggressive and hostile fantasies. The fantasies characteristic of this sadistic stage, according to Klein, are aggressive and enviously destructive, consisting of sadistic desires to devour the mother or her breast or other part objects she is assumed to contain, part objects of both parents, and other children. The mixed parental part objects are assumed to be present in the mother because of the infantile fantasy that the mother incorporates the father in intercourse. The child further assumes that these things are edible, appropriate objects for its oral-sadistic desires.

Klein has been taken to task for stating that very young infants have such specific fantasies and knowledge. If one sets aside or stretches out her developmental timetable, however, as Kernberg (1966) suggests, it is comprehensible that an infant could have an array of memory traces of sensations and experiences, including visual experiences, which would give rise to the fantasy content described above. A fantasy of the mother as containing all these things, or as composed of all these things, could be accounted for by the infant's view of the mother as the most significant organizing element in his or her world. Also, the timetable is not necessary for Bion's use of Klein.

I have suggested that it is more reasonable to assume some real experiences with part objects than an innate knowledge of them in the infant to account for the fantasies Klein reports. In doing so, I am introducing a relationship to reality which Klein does not discuss in these terms until slightly later developmentally. Again, I think the alteration is merely one of adopting earlier an explanation which will work as well at either point and does no violence to the other parts of the model which are necessary. Klein implicitly makes use of this sort of primitive relationship to reality--it is mostly perception--in her explanation of the rise of symbol formation. Her final position is one of a sort of feedback loop between the inner world of the child, which exists as a set of fantasies about internalized objects, and the external world.

Turning again to the development of a reality relation: Klein was very taken with Ferenczi's (1916) idea "that the basis of identification, as a stage preliminary to symbolism, is the fact that at an early stage of its development the child tries to discover its bodily organs and their activities in every object which it encounters" (Klein, 1923, p. 85). She cites also Jones' (1916) paper on symbolism, which explains some equivalences in terms of the pleasure principle; objects which are similar in that they give pleasure, or are objects of similar (pleasurable, libidinal) interest, may be equated. Klein uses both these ideas to account for symbol formation. She suggests that these pleasure similarities and body part resemblances which she terms identifications, are first made by the infant within his or her own body. In time, external persons and things are identified with body parts (by similarity in function or pleasure as perceived by the child) and thus can be used as symbols for

them. Note the basically idiosyncratic nature of this process, which seems to reflect the individual variability in the history of some symbols which appears in later psychoanalytic work with children and adults, despite similarities due to resemblances within the species. It is the equation on the basis of the child's own particular meanings which results in a symbol, even if most children will make many of the same equations.

This is related to what Freud termed displacement and is a characteristic of the primary process; here we see its adaptive nature. Later on, the child will be able to equate people and things apart from the first identifications with his or her own body, and thus to transfer his or her fantasies back and forth among the symbols (Klein, 1921, 1927, 1955). This makes play therapy with children for the relief of anxiety possible; it also enables the child to manipulate reality symbolically and discover the hypothetical, so that creativity is possible (Isaacs, 1952). A second aspect of this route to symbolism stressed by Klein is that the external world is libidinized through the process. Apparently, the infant transfers libido onto external objects when they are viewed as sources of pleasure or pleasurable compared with parts of his or her own body. Isaacs adds that a libidinization of the external world through its connection with oral satisfaction is necessary before any positive relationship of loving it, playing with it, or knowing about it becomes possible.

Klein has another, more lengthy exposition of the rise of symbol formation (1930a) which is presented with more attention to issues of sadism and hostility. The later account is probably the source of Bion's group references, but the earlier one completes the later, as follows.

We left consideration of the sadistic phase after listing the types of fantasies Klein puts in this period and commenting on the tenability of this position. Whether there is innate sadism which makes its appearance here, or whether sadistic impulses are a reaction to the inevitable frustrations of infancy, is far from being a decidable issue. Klein sees the implication of the urge, however, in the infant's fantasy of attacking the part object-collection mother.

Here the approach to the mother's body is attack, but Klein also terms the desired aim as one of wishing to possess and control the mother's body and its contents. This impulse may not be purely sadistic in itself, but easily develops sadistic elements. Despite its emphasis on the sadistic urges, this second account allows for a somewhat broader view of early fantasies. The urge to possess may be a libidinal one, which gives rise to aggressive details because the child's paradigm for possession and control is the experience of oral incorporation, which can become an outlet for aggression.

Klein states that the infant fears retaliation from the united parents (from the mother-collection) because of his or her (fantasied) attacks directed at it. Also, there is an early projection of the death instinct, or less controversially, of some aggressive impulses, onto external objects vaguely located as not inside. This is another reason to imagine and fear retaliation. Finally, some of these feared, persecutory objects are introjected to populate the fantasied internal world with bad figures whose fantasied presence creates more anxiety. According to Klein, these figures are internalized in the sadistic incorporation of the part objects to gain control of them in the fantasy described above; despite the fact that they have come to be viewed as persecutory, they remain objects

one wishes to possess. Presumably, the fantasies and anxiety associated with these objects continue in an altered form once they are imagined to be inside.

The child is thus placed in a position of dreading the part objects he or she wishes to devour because of feared retaliation. The ego must do something to cope with this anxiety and the sadism which causes it, at a time when the ego is not very capable. Klein suggests that the fear of the dreaded part objects is a spur to symbol formation along with the libidinal motivations noted earlier. The anxiety leads the child to equate the part objects with other things to avoid the anxiety which is aroused by the part objects. One way in which the anxiety can be transferred between ego tendencies or activities is through a common sexual-symbolic tie (Klein, 1923). These new things or events may themselves come to evoke the anxiety, however, so further equations are necessary, in the course of which the ego broadens its relationship with the external world (cf. Werner and Kaplan, 1963).

In Klein's description of this process, reference to "inner" fantasy and outer reality alternates, and the relationship needs to be more carefully detailed. Since the equations which lead to symbolism take place in fantasy we must look again at the relationship between fantasy and reality.

Klein implies that fantasies about events and part objects are a first relationship to reality. For example, the sadistic fantasies narrated above are a basic relationship to the outside world (1930a). If there is a premature defense against the fantasies of sadistic exploration and appropriation of the mother's body, the relationship to all of reality will be hindered. There is a crucial point in development here: the infant must be able to tolerate somehow the anxiety raised by these

fantasies, and the ego must be able to "use" the anxiety as an impetus for symbol formation and the continued elaboration of fantasies employing the symbols. Clearly, Klein believes that if this does not occur, due to some innate or environmental failing, normal development will not continue, and a "realistic" relationship to reality becomes impossible but for a few primitive areas. If anxiety here arrests the production of symbolic equivalences, or if later anxiety suspends it, the tie to reality which depends on these equivalences and their emotional components (since we are not really talking about the use of extremely abstracted, e.g., verbal, symbols yet) will be lost. Klein implies that schizophrenia, with its disruption in use of symbols and lack of affective relationship to the world, is a regression to this point. She discusses in detail a case of a child with such an arrest in the production of, and interest in, symbols (1930a). If the process of symbolism can proceed, on the other hand, interest in external reality, further fantasies, use of play for relief from anxiety-producing fantasies, a creative approach to problem-solving, and sublimation can develop. Again this progress depends on the ability to tolerate early anxieties. Therefore, there is a relationship between the capacity to tolerate anxiety, and symbolic thought and reality testing.

The relationship between fantasy and reality seems to be in the nature of a feedback system. Some elements of fantasies are memory traces of sensations or other "real" or external events as the infant felt them; this is the first step in the series of connections to reality which is fully expended later in the infant's use of his or her body as a pattern for fantasies about activities and objects outside as well as inside.*

*This seems to be the source of Isaac's (1952) claim that the infant can test reality from birth, although a much more primitive relationship to reality seems to be implied here.

There is a relationship to the body which is another aspect of the early relationship to reality. As noted, the infant tries to rid itself of anxieties and aggressive impulses arising internally by fantasies of expelling them into the outside world, then experiencing them as originating outside in projective identification, or else internalizing these objects and experiencing the anger and anxiety as coming from internal objects felt to be things-inside. Similar processes of fantasied introjection of good qualities of objects, dimly perceived as external, or of projection of good qualities felt to be inside, could also be sketched. Also, good internal objects may be fantasied to have been expelled, perhaps in order to protect them from the bad internal objects, in another use of projective identification.

In the beginning this operation is characterized predominantly by fantasy and an inaccurate portrayal of reality in its parallels in the internal world with the exceptions described in the last paragraph. But the ability to tolerate anxiety and engage in symbol formation entails increased interest in relating to real things. Perception of, and realistic appraisal of, real things enables one in turn to compare reality with fantasy, which is important because the fantasy model of the world has been one of the major bases for action and reaction. The fantasy views of the world either as an overwhelming source of danger, or as idealized and perfectly unhurt by one's sadistic fantasies, can be gradually confirmed or disconfirmed. This leads to alteration of the fantasies, and in turn better approximations to reality in the internal world. This procedure is also important in the development and resolution of the depressive position (1935) when the infant begins to realize its objects are not merely disconnected parts, and that splitting the objects (of its

love and hate) does not occur in reality. With the gradual integration which occurs, the internal objects come to more closely approximate the real parents. This involves relief that the objects of hatred, which are also needed and feared, are not mutilated and destroyed, and sadness because one's idealizations are not found in reality either. The decrease in plausibility of feelings of omnipotence which comes with integration can lead to a less hopeful view of the world, but such hope as remains is more realistic because it is based on awareness of the difference between destructive impulses and their effects. All this tends to alleviate anxiety and guilt, which adds to the impetus to maintain connections with reality (e.g., Klein, 1932b).

As the back and forth process and the development of sophisticated symbols come to imply some ability to differentiate reality and fantasy, and to correct inaccuracies in the match between them, these are potentially more adaptive undertakings than the primitive identifications on which they are based. Real dangers are more easily mastered than fantasy ones because one can test methods of dealing with them. This is rarely possible for the imagined situations. The infant can't really find out by direct observation or experience what is going on in the mother's body or its own in terms of combinations of part objects and destructive control of them. Far more detailed and testable information is available about the symbolic representations of objects in play, or in interactions with the objects themselves. In addition, discharge of aggression in connection with symbolic activities comes to be a way to achieve some relief from aggressive impulses towards objects without hurting them, once symbol formation is advanced. Similar patterns of fantasy and discharge which preserve one's own body, or restore its fantasied injuries, may be noted.

The history of the relationship to reality originates in fantasy

equivalences and primitive physical identifications, so the process retains the possibility of describing relationships to the external world which are not purely symbolic in the most abstract representational sense. For example, empathy may be based on imagining another's position as if it were one's own. This seems to be what Klein means when she speaks of projection as a way to understand others (1959).

The internal objects Klein describes, which populate the fantasied internal world, seem to have two fates which will be important later. As outlined above, one fate is a gradual transformation into relatively realistic mental representations of the world, recognized and used as such. The other is a continued existence as fantasies of objects with particular characteristics inside one, although these fantasies are not ordinarily available to the normal adult (Kernberg, 1973). The apparent reciprocity between these possibilities is the source of considerable difficulty.

CHAPTER FOUR

BION: THINKING AND REALITY

Bion believes that contact with a group is difficult, and produces psychotic anxiety, for several reasons. One assumption is that the group serves as a symbol for an early mother image which evoked anxiety in the infant. This mother image is comprised of part objects onto which the infant has projected aggression, and from which retaliation is feared. The infant also wishes to control and devour the needed part objects. Psychotic anxiety is a recreation of this anxiety state, evoked when the group is experienced symbolically and in the context of these fantasies. It also occurs with the attempt to realistically know the group, when the symbolic meaning of the group and the symbolic meanings of knowing activity are both activated.

Bion postulates that basic assumption life appears in groups as a defense against this anxiety, and that the basic assumption mentality itself has characteristics of the primitive period in development when psychotic anxiety is first experienced. Bion's work on thinking is relevant to his description of basic assumption life, particularly in the nature of the relationship between the individual (who fantasizes, thinks, and acts) and reality. Because of this connection, and the use Bion's account of thinking makes of Klein's framework, I will present Bion's ideas on thinking before discussing basic assumption life more fully, and attempt to articulate the Kleinian elements in it. This is based on Bion's (1962a, 1962b) discussions of learning and thinking and

on some of Wollheim's (1969) commentary on this.

Bion's description separates thinking from thoughts and regards thinking as an apparatus or process developed to deal with thoughts, which come to exist first. Bion follows Freud (1911b, 1914, 1925) in taking thinking to be a response to excess accretions of stimuli in the organism, which experiences this as frustration. These accretions need to be discharged or dealt with, here by being "worked over" in the mind in some way.

As direct discharge in behavior or physiognomic change becomes impossible, inadequate, or undesirable, these accretions find indirect discharge in the working-over of the stimuli in the mind, in the new activity of thought (Wollheim, 1969, p. 214).

Wollheim notes the parallels between accepting or rejecting a thought, and the activity of the purified pleasure ego in accepting pleasurable elements of experience into itself and expelling unpleasant ones. This is another example (see ch. 3) of the use of physical experiences as models for ego activity or mental activity (cf. Freud, 1925). Wollheim's account of Bion's addition to Freud's description of thinking, sketched above, is that

. . . the stimulus to be worked over must first be subsumed by the mind under some corporeal or quasi-corporeal conception.... For unless some such subsumption is effected, how could the stimulus be experienced as a fit or suitable object for the process of introjection or expulsion in which, on Freud's theory, thinking has its origin? (p. 214).

Bion suggests that normally infants develop a conception about the world when a pre-conception, or disposition or expectation to have a particular conception, is joined with an emotionally satisfying realization of it, for example, the expectation of "breast" with the event "breast". A thought arises from the conjunction of the pre-conception

with a frustration of this expectation; in the example, the frustrated expectation of breast would result not in a conception of breast but "the experience of an 'absent' breast inside" (1962b, p. 307). Thinking becomes necessary to deal with these thoughts.

Bion clearly means that without frustration one would never need to learn to think, because, in his view, one would never develop thoughts. This is an elaboration of Freud's first speculations on the development of the reality principle (e.g., 1911b). The way in which these thoughts, products of frustration, are then dealt with is influenced by the individual's ability to withstand frustration, and the history of this development which may be bound up with fantasies about physical processes.

In Learning from Experience (1962a), Bion provides more detail and suggests the fantasies.

As a 'model' of [a] thought I take a sensation of a hunger that is associated with a visual image of a breast that does not satisfy but is of a kind that is needed. This needed object is a bad object. All objects that are needed are bad objects because they tantalize. They are needed because they are not possessed in fact; if they were possessed there would be no lack. As they don't exist they are peculiar objects different from objects that exist. Thoughts then, or these primitive elements that are protothoughts, are bad, needed objects and to be got rid of because they are bad. They can be got rid of either by evasion or modification (pp. 83-84).

Notice Bion's reference to a visual image and visceral sensation as parts of the proto-thought. These elements are also found in fantasy, in Kleinian terms, and this suggests that what Bion means by thoughts may be special types of fantasies about things inside one, or that some types of fantasies may become thoughts. This could be a derivative of Klein's implication that some early fantasies can become fairly accurate representations of things existing in reality. Bion stresses the images which arise from frustration, in particular; the image of something which

is needed but not there is experienced as a bad object inside one. Considerable development must take place to bridge the gap between this negative experience of lacking something, and the use of an idea of something which is needed in order to act to get it. The idea that the existence of the needed object is possible must be available. Also, Bion is suggesting a development which will require further activity by the organism. A primitive thought of this type is experienced as a bad thing because it is intimately associated with a deprivation, and then this bad thing must be handled because its presence is unpleasant.

Bion continues,

The problem [of frustration] is solved by evacuation if the personality is dominated by the impulse to evade frustration and by thinking the objects [the bad internal object fantasy proto-thoughts described above] if the personality is dominated by the impulse to modify the frustration (p. 84).

If frustration cannot be tolerated, the apparatus for treating thoughts deals with them simply as if they were bad internal objects, whose evacuation would be synonymous with incorporation of the relevant good objects. The spatial metaphor implied here is that the bad object proto-thoughts "hold a place for" the needed good objects and therefore must be removed first. For example, expelling a bad breast is fantasied to be equivalent to obtaining sustenance from a good breast (1962b, p. 307). Recall that Bion continues to rely on Freud's model which emphasizes that there must be a way for the organism to deal with (frustrating) accretions of stimuli, which here in Bion's terms become thoughts, for the organism to survive. One implication of this is that talking may become a way to discharge thoughts (as accretions of stimuli) through the muscular activity involved, not a way of communicating about thinking. The actual development of thinking in order to modify frustration requires some

frustration tolerance--some admission that one has not been satisfied in reality with consequent adaptation to that admission and that reality. Then, thoughts become names and images represented as such; representations of other things-in-themselves, useful in modifying frustration by thinking about them, and implicitly using their representational tie to the real world. They represent things which do exist somewhere, if not in one's grasp, and thus may become available for fulfillment. This is similar to Klein's and Isaac's remarks on the usefulness of fantasy for dealing with reality because it enables one to examine hypotheticals.

If frustration tolerance is not present, thoughts are evaded by the kind of fantasy which deals with a bad internal object, instead of a thought, that is, a fantasy that it has been evacuated and perhaps put somewhere else. In this case some of the proto-thoughts may seem to be names or images which might be used for thinking if they were recognized as names, but they are not: the name is taken as a concrete thing in itself which is dealt with as an object, as happens in schizophrenia.

The fantasy that one can expel things from within one's (psychic) self and place them elsewhere is projective identification (Klein, 1946) --here a mechanism for relief from accretions of stimuli experienced as bad objects, or proto-thoughts dealt with by evasion. These are bad objects because they are treated as things in themselves and not as representations of objects which do exist. It is important to note, however, that projective identification may also be used on good internal objects, perhaps to "put them in a safe place."

Bion's view of projective identification is that it involves some contact with reality despite its fantasy character. (Compare Klein's assertion that fantasy is one relation to reality.) He believes that the

infant from the beginning of life "has contact with reality sufficient to enable him to act in a way that engenders in the mother feelings that he does not want, or which he wants the mother to have" (1962a, p. 31). For some very disturbed patients, severe acting out may be an attempt to create the reality which would make possible a projective identification which otherwise would remain a purely omnipotent, unrealistic fantasy. Smaller manipulations also serve to make projective identifications appear to have substance in reality.

The degree to which the projective identification is connected to reality, that is, the accuracy of the perception or manipulation of the reality which should match the fantasy, is one indication of the severity of a patient's problem; it is also a measure of ability to tolerate frustration. The mechanism may be used by relatively normal persons in some circumstances, Bion would argue, but the extent of its use may vary along a continuum. On this continuum,

5. The patient's ability to gear his omnipotent fantasy of projective identification to reality is directly related to his capacity for tolerance of frustration. If he cannot tolerate frustration the omnipotent fantasy of projective identification has proportionately less factual counterpart in external reality. This contributes to the state Melanie Klein describes as excessive projective identification (Bion, 1962a, p. 32).

One example of a point along this continuum is in the psychotic who has developed some awareness of the representational quality of names which were formerly merely proto-thoughts. He or she thus is able to employ some minimal symbolic functioning in dreaming, yet is still unable to engage in thinking, and uses projective identification to deal with thoughts when awake. This projective identification is less divorced from reality by virtue of some awareness of representational function, however, and a corresponding increase in the dominance of the reality

principle which results. Bion does not explain how this occurs, but awareness of the representational nature of names implies sufficient toleration for frustration to admit there are things one thinks of yet does not possess in reality, which is a movement in the direction of the reality principle.

"Excessive" projective identification refers to an excessive belief in one's omnipotence, an extreme case where projective identification becomes "a resort to omnipotent fantasy as a flight from reality, and in particular from feelings which are not wanted" (1962a, p. 32; cf. 1962b, p. 308). This case may refer to a total inability to think the thoughts, so that what is observed is a stream of fragmentary verbalizations experienced as if they are things, with the person feeling unable to think. Bion also indicates another position which may replace the normal ability to think and learn from experience which must be distinguished from this one, perhaps in the subjective degree of fragmentation. This second pathological position is organized around the fantasy of omniscience.

If intolerance of frustration is not so great as to activate the mechanisms of evasion and yet is too great to bear dominance of the reality principle, the personality develops omnipotence as a substitute for the maturing of the pre-conception or conception, with the negative realization. This involves the assumption of omniscience as a substitute for learning from experience by aid of thoughts and thinking. There is therefore no psychic activity to discriminate between true and false. Omniscience substitutes for the discrimination between true and false a dictatorial affirmation that one thing is morally right and the other wrong. The assumption of omniscience that denies reality ensures that the morality that is engendered is a function of psychosis (1962b, p. 308).

That is, a psychotic part of the personality which does not discriminate true and false on the basis of reality develops. There is enough organization for some discrimination to be made with less desperate fragmentation than the case previously described, and with different types of fantasies. In the case of excessive projective identification,

the fantasy that one can successfully dispose of concretely experienced thoughts by placing them elsewhere is used. Here, the fantasy of omniscience replaces awareness of the frustration engendered by the failure of the environment to perfectly match the person's needs, and to provide realizations to match the expectations. There will be little if any reality testing and contact with reality. The comparison necessitated by reality testing, with the possibility of a less than perfect match, is replaced by arbitrariness. This seems to be what Bion means by morality--judgement about truth and falsity. Implied is the idea that such judgements can be accurately made on the basis of reality; yet, the limitations of human knowledge are such that one would not want to call common misperceptions or popularly believed "falsehoods" about science, for example, psychotic manifestations. It would probably be more tenable to limit assessments about reality testing to consensual social reality. I think the usefulness of Bion's conception in this passage is in its expression of the dogmatic, arbitrary nature of certain excessive uses of omniscience fantasies, and similar psychotic mechanisms.

Bion does not specify in detail the degrees of tolerance of anxiety and frustration, or of environmental stress, which result in outcomes which may be termed neurotic, borderline, or psychotic, but one further variable might be the degree of reality in the projection, that is, how accurate is it as an indicator of reality as well as a projection. Another would be the distance from the person of the projection (e.g., another person, a thing, an earthquake, outerspace) or its degree of fragmentation (cf. the Schreber case, Freud, 1911a).

Both excessive projective identification, and fantasied omniscience and omnipotence, interfere with the distinction between one's

fantasies and outer reality. What Klein and Bion term excessive projective identification can lead to confusion about the location of aspects of personality and reality, and consequent difficulty in acting effectively. Fantasies of omnipotence imply that the self-other boundary is not drawn clearly, so that activity to change the external world may be confused with activity to change the self, or with magical mental processes.

Bion's Kleinian heritage is evident in the use he makes of the concepts of internal objects and fantasies about them, and in his employment of the body as a model for fantasies about mental processes. For example, introjection is modeled on ingestion or inhaling, projection on evacuation or exhaling. Some examples of this usage have been given above; another striking one is Bion's description of a patient who apparently does this in a way which fits Bion's model. This patient, who cannot combine his sense data with interpersonal communications so as to achieve the ordinary consensual view of reality, experiences "a mental state of debility. . . as if starvation of truth was somehow analogous to alimentary starvation" (1962b, p. 310).

Wollheim has discussed some of the advantages of the Kleinian account of mental processes, a model of external and internal objects with rules for their transformation (introjection, projection or projective identification, splitting), which attributes explanatory power to fantasy or individual meaning. One reason this model is useful is that meaning is such an important part of distinctively human behavior in its broad sense, and a system with a specific and prominent place for this may be more readily applied. Also, using the meaning of an event or image to an individual as a dynamic or explanation for behavior is parsimonious. As cited earlier in this paper, use of corporeal metaphors for mental or personality processes is rampant in daily life; we have a history of

attaching meanings to physical processes we experience, or, as Klein has it, of using these processes as parallels to explain things we see outside ourselves. We tend to have, or at least begin with, a spatial concept of mind, though it is more spatial the more one uses thoughts pathologically in the manner described by Bion.

In Bion's description of thoughts and thinking, certain types of proto-thoughts are designated as becoming bad internal objects (or fantasies experienced as such) to be handled by fantasies of expulsion. If thinking prevails, these proto-thoughts seem to gradually become recognized as more or less representational and not actually things-in-themselves, not entities like those in the external world. When they are not so recognized, the person's model of the mind is a more spatial one:

If the learner is intolerant of the essential frustration of learning he indulges fantasies of omniscience and a belief in a state where things are known. Knowing something [in this state] consists of 'having' some 'piece of' knowledge and not in what I have called K [approximately, the activity of knowing] (1962a, p. 64).

This state seems to be one in which there are no thoughts or thinking, but only fantasies of and about internal objects, a halt in development at this primitive point delineated by Klein. Bion seems to imply that there is normally a gradual development toward more thinking process and less use of thoughts as themselves things associated with concrete fantasies. If he follows Klein, however, Bion must differentiate this developmental process from the vicissitudes of internal object formation and influence which Klein describes as continuing throughout life.

Wollheim discusses the distinction Klein makes between thoughts about external objects and thoughts (in a general, mature sense, as in thoughts used in thinking) and fantasies about internal objects which correspond to them, for example, thoughts about the real parent and the

internal object felt to be that parent inside. He believes that the distinction is based on the difference in history. The internal object has arisen in conjunction with a fantasy of having incorporated that object (or some part of it), perhaps to control the object. This is not the case for thoughts about external real objects, or, it is no longer the case--the connection to the incorporation fantasy has been severed or lost.

There is some difficulty with Bion's scheme, however. Good and bad internal objects may result from the fantasies of incorporation Klein describes. Wollheim would claim that as internal objects, these continue to be associated with a fantasy about their incorporation. Thoughts about real objects (objects which may also be the stimuli for fantasies of their incorporation) are no longer associated with these fantasies, or never have been. But Bion seems to be saying that thoughts are the transformed versions of certain bad internal objects--certain frustrating accretions of stimuli, associated with the absence of the good, gratifying object, which are experienced as things inside. Any object may become needed, and thus a proto-thought of it may arise, which is experienced as a bad thing inside, according to Bion. Therefore, it seems, thoughts which arise in this way will always refer to bad objects. The absent good object is experienced as frustrating, and therefore, as a bad object, and the resulting proto-thought is felt to be a bad internal object.

A more complete explanation for the possibility of thought about good objects is required. This would rely on the relationship between thinking and the depressive position, which Bion has developed elsewhere (1953, 1963).

- The capacity to form symbols is dependent on
- (1)The ability to grasp whole objects.
 - (2)The abandonment of the paranoid-schizoid position with its attendant splitting.
 - (3)The bringing together of splits and the ushering in of the depressive position (Bion, 1953, p. 26).

In the depressive position the person is able to tolerate the fact that the good and bad objects are one object which both gratifies and frustrates. Bion further implies that with this accomplishment, the frustration-imbued nature of representational thought is somewhat lessened. This occurs as it becomes possible to think of a good object as not present without experiencing it as transformed radically into a bad object simply by virtue of its absence. With this achievement, representational thought could refer to any object. Without it, or when thought is experienced regressively, all thoughts are felt to be bad objects, so that thinking to deal with these thoughts is also experienced negatively. Schizophrenics, Bion claims, may feel that thinking causes depression because it relies on symbols, which require the toleration of depressive anxiety. This is the anxiety which results from the coming together of positive and negative aspects of the object as perceived by the individual subject. It may refer to fears about the fate of the good object, and of one's idealized hopes for omnipotent fusion with a good object uncontaminated by less than perfect aspects.

Also, in the earliest stages of cognition, anticipation and planning either do not occur, or occur under the pressure of intense desire. There is little need to think about that which one has, until the idea or situation of being without it arises. In later development, thought is often in the service of more remote drive derivatives, so the implicit frustration, required in having to think about a situation not

present, is not so intense. Thus, mature thoughts can refer to internal or external objects, rather than being experienced as internal objects.

In Elements of Psycho-Analysis (1963) Bion sets out stages from primitive thoughts he has been describing, to mature scientific thought. He retains the assumption that frustration tolerance determines the development of thinking, but adds some other postulates to account for the decisive nature of the changes which take place in this development. In particular, the process of alpha-function is hypothesized to account for the transformation from fantasies of things inside concretely (proto-thoughts) to thoughts which are more suitable for thinking processes.

1. Beta elements: This refers to the earliest matrix relevant to the development of thought, where inanimate and psychic objects are not distinguished. "Thoughts are things, things are thoughts; and they have personality" (1963, p. 22). Such thoughts indistinguishable from things may have their emotional counterparts in "fantasies that are felt to be indistinguishable from facts" (p. 97). Beta elements are suitable for projective identification or fantasies of expulsion, not for dreaming or thinking; they are "undigested facts" (1962a, p. 7), and can include sense impressions and emotions untransformed by any mental process, and are stored as such.

2. Alpha elements: Results of the exercise of alpha function on sense impressions, and emotions. If the function is successful in producing alpha elements, these elements can be stored and used to make dreams. Some alpha elements are similar or identical to the visual images found in dreams. Alpha elements are necessary for mature thought to develop.

3. Dream thoughts: As noted above, these depend on the existence of alpha and beta elements and their fates. Bion accepts a classical

psychoanalytic position here, i.e., that dream thoughts are communicated by the manifest content of a dream but remain latent unless translated (1963, p. 23). There is evidence for dreams, so the postulated entity, "dream thoughts", has some relatively direct correspondence with experience. Alpha and beta elements are theoretical terms required to explain certain processes termed projective identification or secondary process thought.

4. Pre-conception: An expectation, a "state of mind adapted to receive a restricted range of phenomena," for example, the infant's expectation of the breast(p. 23).

5. Conception: When the expectation of a narrow range of phenomena is fulfilled by the presence of an approximation to the pre-conception, a conception results. The pre-conception has been "saturated." However, the resulting conception is also the basis for an expectation of the recurrence of the phenomenon experienced (pp. 23-24). I would suggest it becomes a more precise expectation, e.g., for a particular breast.

6. Concept: A conception freed of elements which make it unfit to be used as "a tool in the elucidation or expression of truth" (p. 24). This would seem to be a process of abstraction or generalization from the conception.

7. Scientific deductive system: This is a set of concepts with logical relationships added so that the concepts are organized into hypotheses and systems of hypotheses. Because of this addition, the system means more than the sum of the meanings of the concepts which comprise it.

8. Calculus: A set of signs with "no properties other than those conferred on them by the rules of combination" (p. 24) for the signs. This can be used to represent the scientific deductive system.

Although these are presented as hierarchical stages in development, Bion's use of them to describe psychoanalytic sessions indicates that each may persist. That is, the more primitive types of cognitive processes may continue to be possibilities, along with the more mature forms of thought. The earlier stages are closer to physical fantasies and concrete experiences from which examples of them may arise; the later are more remote. The availability, and in some cases the continuing influence, of primitive forms and meanings, is part of Klein's system.

Bion's assumption is that each category listed in the stages of thinking "depends on changes, in the previous category, that fit it to operate as a preconception as well as a record" (1963, p. 33). Thus, he needs to represent a mechanism of change. This is the operation $\phi\hat{\phi}$. This operation is approximately equivalent to "the essential feature of Melanie Klein's concept of projective identification. . . . It is a representation of an element [of Bion's theory] which would be called a dynamic relationship between container and contained" (p. 3). Thus, each category must in some sense "contain" the previous one(s), as a result of this operation.

A second process involved in the change from one category to another is $Ps \leftrightarrow D$. This represents the change between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in Melanie Klein's theory. It may also be described as disintegration and reintegration: the coming together of apparently unrelated elements, associated with feelings of persecution, into an integrated whole associated with feelings of depression. As noted above, this means that thinking is a product of the achievement of the depressive position.

These various elements are also stages in that with one exception,

each contains "unsaturated" aspects or expectations which may be fulfilled or realized and then suited for further use as expectations or preconceptions. The one exception is the beta element, which is already saturated in itself and must be transformed into something else, first an alpha element, to serve this function.

Alpha function is a crucial component in this account of the growth of normal thought. It is something like abstraction, in that it avoids or eliminates the concreteness of beta elements. Without successful use of alpha function, the person is unable to dream and unable to test reality in the commonly accepted way--i.e., psychotic parts of the personality obtrude excessively (1962a, p. 54). Alpha function is the process hypothesized by Bion (1962a, pp. 667, 25026, 55, 75) to account for this transformation. Although Bion does not specify this, it, too seems related to the achievements of the depressive position, perhaps as a sort of precursor or primitive form of $\varphi\sigma$ and $Ps \leftrightarrow D$.

This idea of matching of preconception or expectation with reality is, of course, extremely important in the development of thought as a means for dealing with reality. While Klein claims simply that fantasy is one relationship to reality, Bion details the various possibilities. Beta elements close off possibilities of change and new arrangements; alpha elements and thoughts have the openness of potentially different relationships to reality as new realizations are accepted or assimilated to the expectations. Beta elements are "undigested facts" derived from sense experience and emotions without any reciprocal testing of their adequacy as representations; they are not perceived as representations or as capable of being used in this way. They are concrete things to be handled concretely. Beta elements as things in themselves severely limit

the avenues for dealing with reality since they lack the relationship of expectation.

In Elements of Psycho-Analysis (1963), Bion assumes a primitive thinking which is active in the development of thought. This seems to refer to his discussions of projective identification as a way to deal with beta elements. This is exemplified in the patient who felt the words he uttered were objects, and that once they were in the room he could take in their meaning from their arrangement.

As noted above, in order to move beyond this position to thinking which can deal with more abstract thoughts, frustration and pain must be tolerated. If this is not accomplished, some realizations will not be allowed to match their preconceptions, to avoid pain, and the person will not develop normal reality testing. One must be able to withstand pain and frustration, and be able to modify it rather than evade it. The pressure of reality then has a salutary effect on thinking, which must become sufficiently precise to ensure survival. This would exclude excessive use of the more primitive categories or stages. If the person is able to allow dominance of the reality principle, then thoughts, thinking and reason are further stimulated.

Another way of putting this is that if the person has some innate capacity for frustration tolerance, thoughts and thinking develop, which are even better ways to deal with frustration. The thought may be initially used as a substitute for the missing and therefore frustrating object, and thus provides some continuity of experience. In the period before intrapsychic differentiation of mother and child, the child may use thoughts, including primitive forms of thought with concrete aspects, to avoid the painfulness of separation (Voyat, 1978). The stages of thought

which include expectations contribute to the feeling of continuity.

Klein viewed symbolism as developing outward from bodily experiences, to which other experience was assimilated and equated, ending eventually in representational thoughts (after more abstraction). Thus, symbolism is a way of libidinizing the world, when it is perceived as conforming to, or similar to, the child's body. In Bion's work, the beta element as a concrete thing inside one could express this attachment to the world, which results in having the thing inside, though it attempts to deny the real effects of frustration. If frustration is not withstood, development beyond this to a more sophisticated relationship to reality does not occur. If frustration can be tolerated, however, there is an advance to a type of primitive thought which can express this attachment to, and need of objects, at the same time that it recognizes the frustration of not really having and controlling them all the time. This tension between concrete possession of fantasy objects (which is a form of grandiosity), and admission that they are really elsewhere and must be thought about, in order to regain possession of them, results in the development of the reality principle. Thus, splitting, which allows denial of the frustrating aspects of the good object, and the gratifying aspects of the bad object, must be overcome to use representative thought in this way.

$P_s \leftrightarrow D$ and $\varphi\sigma'$ are mechanisms for elaboration and employment of thoughts, each of which can assume the characteristics of the other (1963, p. 44). These theoretical terms are abstractions from Klein's concept of projective identification.

Bion assumes that the development of the process $\varphi\sigma'$ to account for the possibility of mature thinking and use of thoughts derives from level

of innate frustration tolerance, and from specific experiences. The mother is originally responsible for alpha function--she accepts the infant's feelings and sense data and in some way makes it possible for the infant to have all this as experience in the form of alpha elements, rather than "undigested" beta elements. Bion speculates that this process may take place in the mother as reverie (1962b). Alpha elements, recall, are hypothetical entities with sufficient abstraction and connection to reality to be used for dream thoughts and the basis of thinking. Successful incorporation of this function of the mother, which is also described by Bion as successful introjection of the good breast (which includes this function) is necessary for thinking to develop. This introjection of the good breast may be some special fantasy, based on experiences of the mother's acceptance and assistance.

One aspect of using the mother to develop thinking, in its broadest sense, is the directing of projective identification at her (1962b, 1965, 1959b). This would include projection of a painful feeling, e.g. the infant's fear that it was dying, into the mother, and receiving it in less terrifying form in return. Good and bad internal objects might also be projected and then experienced as reposing in the mother for safety or transformation. The mother thus functions as a container.

This is a normal use of projective identification, which includes a tie to reality. Development will be abnormal if the mother is unable to accept the projections, or is unable to respond calmly enough to induce a less painful or fearful state in the infant, when negative entities are projected. Also, the infant's emotions are too powerful for him or her to contain alone, and it is only with this help from the mother that he or she can gradually learn about and cope with emotional life. The

innate endowment which makes this possible is tolerance for the link between infant and mother implied by this process. According to Bion, infants with excessive innate hostility, or insurmountable envy of the mother (or breast, the good part object) in her ability to help with the feelings, and to carry out alpha function, may eventually become psychotic. They do not develop a stable tie to reality, especially in terms of the ability to think about reality. Bion's model for the development of thinking ability in the infant is an introjection of the aspect of the mother which performs alpha function and can accept projective identification. In psychosis, the resulting apparatus for thinking may be attacked and projected outward again. Symbol formation becomes difficult because all linking between thought processes is attacked (1953, 1959b).

Transformation from beta to alpha element by the mother also involves the bestowal of meaning through the link. Instead of a nameless, formless dread or chaos, the infant feels there is meaning to experience. The mother has been able to contain the child's experience, and in doing so gives it a "shape" or meaning. This model of contained-container relationship is also part of Bion's theoretical framework for the development of meaning.

One application of this is an understanding of the $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ mechanism. PS would represent a cloud of particles capable of coming together, which could function as ♀, a container; D would be an object capable of fragmentation or dispersion which could serve as ♀ or ♂. The thinking apparatus is then represented by Bion as ♂♀-thinking operations take place with any element functioning as either ♀ or ♂, as container or contained, pre-conception or conception. The possibilities of this

reciprocity are much greater and more flexible than those produced by beta elements with projective identification as a mechanism.

The most significant application of the container-contained model is in the area of naming and meaning. In this context, Bion adopts Poincaré's (1952) ideas on the selection of facts. A name "comes into existence when a set of phenomena are recognized as having a coherence of which the meaning is unknown" (Bion, 1963, p. 87). The phenomena are perceived as related, and are given a name to contain them and prevent scattering, fragmentation, and splitting. Then the name serves as a preconception awaiting a realization, and makes it possible to think about the coherence.

The name, in fact, is

. . . A sign intended to mark, and bind a constant conjunction. It is therefore significant, but devoid of meaning. It receives its accretion of meaning from experience. It is similar to a theory in that both imply that certain qualities are constantly conjoined. . . (1965, p. 53).

The relationship between $P_s \leftrightarrow D$ and $\varphi\delta$ is finally clarified by Bion in this context. The $P_s \leftrightarrow D$ operation is responsible for the "delineation of the whole object" (1963, p. 90), a function understandable in terms of Klein's concept of the depressive position. In the depressive position, the object is seen as whole, rather than as fragmented because of one's inability or unwillingness to integrate contradictory or painful aspects of experience. However, the meaning of the whole object perceived, bound and named, depends on the operation of $\varphi\delta$. This process enables the name to contain the aspects of the phenomena experienced.

There are two interesting implications in this account. One of these is the idea that giving a name and making a theory are very similar

processes. Since Bion is concerned in his later works with constructing a theory for psychoanalysis, he has amplified this topic. The other implication, which will be discussed in a later chapter, has to do with a particular aspect of the relationship between container and contained, the boundary between. In a concrete model of container and contained, tactile stimulation is actually available to reinforce the distinction (1963, p. 96). But in theoretical, emotional, or fantasy applications, there is no actual physical barrier, only a concept. Thus, confusion can occur incidental to the employment of the mechanism of ♀♂, useful as it is.

PART II

OTHER VIEWS

Difficulties in thinking and working due to psychotic anxiety and basic assumption life are postulated by Bion. Psychotic anxiety is a part of the regression which other authors have recognized in group life; basic assumption life refers to processes in individual members which result in a group atmosphere or common fantasy. The following chapters will present other accounts of regression and primitive processes in groups, focusing on the issue of joining a group and the individual's reaction to this.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GOOD GROUP, THE BAD GROUP

Bion contends that an individual's relationship to a group is characterized by a dilemma basic to human existence: human drives are simultaneously narcissistic and social. They are narcissistic insofar as their goal is individual gratification, but they also require the existence of others for satisfaction, either in reality, or fantasy derived in some way from experience with other persons. The group may be experienced realistically as either an obstacle to narcissistic goals, or as a source of gratification. Bion adds to this the hypothesis that human beings have an innate need to be a part of a group life. This is a tendency something like the tendency to develop transference: it is always a potential, but is most clearly revealed in special circumstances, that is, in a small group for basic assumption tendency, in psychoanalysis for transference.

Bion's claim that the group is reacted to as if it were a primitive mother image suggests that less rational levels of experience are also part of one's encounter with a group. These other levels would include conscious and unconscious fantasy and various types of previous experience with groups: not only social groups, but the family as a group, and the mother seen as a "group" of part-objects. The examples below support this contention that groups are experienced as "good" or "bad" on the basis of a variety of levels of response; the accounts are from clinicians working with therapy groups as well as training groups composed of

relatively normal individuals.

The Good Group

Many authors stress the positive aspects of a group experience, which induce pleasurable feelings of belonging and being supported. Several introduce the idea of equation of the group with an image of "mother", or "breast", either in their own speculations or the group's ready use of an interpretation along these lines (Grotjahn, 1972; Ruiz, 1972; Schader and Meltzer, 1968; Scheidlinger, 1974). Others formulate the relationship between the group and member in terms of the individual's desire to experience a de-differentiated empathic state similar to the relationship between the mother and infant before the latter has understood that its existence is separate (Schindler, 1951, 1966; Stanton, 1958). To explain primitive experiences of bliss in the group, Kernberg (1974, 1975b) suggests "activation of an 'all-good', fused self-object image" (1974, p. 269).

Scheidlinger (1955, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1968) agrees that the group stimulates an unconscious fantasy of reunion with the mother in a totally unconflicted state, but believes that the early object relationship which is reactivated with the group is that of need-satisfaction, where the infant is aware of some differentiation between self and object (1974). He suggests that one may usefully distinguish contemporaneous-dynamic and genetic-regressive levels of events and reactions in the group member, so that the group may be consciously seen as a desirable vehicle for satisfaction and growth while also activating unconscious fantasies about reunion with the mother. This covert desire, Scheidlinger hypothesizes, is at the basis of the universal human desire to belong, to establish psychological closeness with others. After carefully examining

the possibilities for identification and empathy in the group, Scheidlinger has concluded that this fantasy relationship to the group is not a merging with pathological loss of individuality, but an adaptive, healthy use of identification with shared goals, or with the group as a whole, which may strengthen and support the ego. Clinically, he has noted that this phenomenon, the supportive value of the group, is particularly strong in persons with ego and identity disturbances stemming from many early deprivations, as if the fantasy relationship to the group as a maternal object in the need-satisfying object relationship could be a bridge to more mature object relationships after the ego has been "fed" (Scheidlinger and Pyrke, 1961). Group therapists tend to foster these experiences to strengthen group cohesion. Aiello (1978) has also observed this phenomenon with psychotic patients, although he believes that the therapy group can also be experienced as a "bad mother".

In a study of groups of strangers formed to discuss hostility toward parents, Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb (1952) noted a state they labelled deindividuation. This referred to members' inability to remember who said what, and correlated positively with the attractiveness of the group. They defined deindividuation as a "state of affairs in a group where members do not pay attention to other individuals qua individuals, and, correspondingly, the members do not feel they are being singled out by others" (p. 389). The authors speculated that the individual can satisfy needs in a group which he or she ordinarily has restraints against, when deindividuation is experienced, and that this makes the group experience more satisfying.

Semrad, Kanter, Shapiro and Arsenian (1963; Arsenian, Semrad, and Shapiro, 1962) also postulate that the depersonalization in groups

of which Bion speaks does not involve a psychotic loss of the sense of self, but "a more normal process of assimilation in a group in which libidinal ties enhance cohesiveness and promote individual dedifferentiation" (1963, p. 462). The extensions of ego boundaries entailed by this "suspension" of individuality enable members to incorporate or imitate other norms, affects and styles of functioning present in the group, for healthy purposes.

As a medium for fulfilling the longings Scheidlinger describes, the group is very attractive to potential members. On one level, it is perceived as offering possibilities for growth, learning, belonging, support, and satisfying social interactions; on another, possibilities for a gratifying fusion or reunion with a mother image through the evocation of primitive self and object representations.

Various authors suggest different points in early development from which these self and object representations come, i.e., a fused, undifferentiated self-object image; a self-image and an object which are recognized as separate, though the object is taken to exist only when it satisfies a need; a primitive group consciousness which includes a handful of familiar persons in an expanded image of symbiosis (Colman, 1975). A reaction to the group could stem from any of these, as well as from later social experiences and conscious expectations about interpersonal relations.

The Bad Group

Groups can also be viewed as threatening and depriving. Bach (1954; see also Durkin, 1964) agrees with Bion that members come to a group seeking gratification, and are prepared to use the patterns of interaction, their own and those common to their society, which previously

have secured satisfaction for them. Thus, tension arises when culturally predictable interactions do not occur. A well-known frustration of small groups is that the leader (or trainer, therapist, or consultant) must be shared by each member with the others (Arsenian, Semrad and Shapiro, 1962; Durkin, 1964; Kaplan and Roman, 1963; Martin and Hill, 1957; Slater, 1966). Favored defensive techniques may be frustrated by the refusal of others to complement one's own defensive maneuvers, or identification with others may be complicated by the number of persons present (Fried, 1965); identification with an authority figure may be rendered difficult by the paucity of information the leader provides about himself or herself (Zinberg and Friedman, 1957). Initially, members experience social isolation (Martin and Hill, 1957), and their groping for structure is accompanied by anxiety (Bach, 1954). Developing social need for others (Semrad, Kanter, Shapiro and Arsenian, 1963) leads to fears that the group will be destroyed by internal strife (Ezriel, 1950), or loss of members through desertion (Slater, 1963). Slater notes that when some members threaten to leave a group in which other members are emotionally involved, so much anxiety is provoked that intense attempts are made to reform the deviant members. This emotional response seems automatic, and is independent of a rational desire to maintain the group for the purpose for which it has met.

In an analysis of hospital therapy groups, Stock (1962) found that fears of being harmed, criticized, ridiculed, or punished by others were expressed, along with fears that one would so harm other members. The idea that exposure to other patients might have deleterious affects on one's own sanity creates anxiety in these groups. In a similar manner, in non-patient groups, the fear is of a mass of irrational strangers

(Schwartz and Wolf, 1963), a fear which is exacerbated in a society which stresses individualism. Redl (1949) has noted the "shock effect" of seeing others exhibiting their impulses freely; Slavson (1953) believes that group members are aware that people may act differently in a group than in a dyad, and thus they feel uncertainty about the functioning of the other members.* As noted previously, Whitaker and Lieberman (1964) list fears of losing control over oneself, and loss of self esteem and identity, as attitudes toward a group.

On the basis of previous social experience, one may also realistically anticipate experiences of anxiety, insecurity, rejection, isolation, slights, humiliation, attack, criticism, and rivalry for status, recognition and acceptance (e.g. Bach, 1954, Slavson, 1953; Tulane, 1957). Persons who have joined to achieve a goal know that their desire to accomplish this may be frustrated or disappointed in the end (Miles, 1953).

Durkin (1964; see also Aiello, 1978; King, 1959; Schindler, 1966; Slater, 1966) has elaborated the idea that the group is experienced as like the preoedipal mother by way of its negative aspects, not merely the positive ones noted above. At first the group is a strange and unknown mass "other", which reminds members of the first other, the preoedipal mother. This image of the mother is feared because the preoedipal mother exerted control over the infant, frustrating him or her and curtailing fantasies of omnipotence. Slater discusses this fear, re-experienced in the group, as a fear of losing self-boundaries and consciousness only recently created out of the symbiotic quality of the first months of life in the mother-infant dyad.

*Slavson attributes this to his belief that some ego and super-ego controls become invested in the group instead of the individual.

Negative expectations from another developmental level are possible; the group may be perceived after the model of one's own family (e.g. Scheidlinger, 1960, 1964; Slavson, 1953) with attendant rivalries and aggressions as well as support. This would be a more conscious expectation or preconception for a group, rather than a reaction necessarily involving a regression. Some group therapists may attempt to foster this equivalence between the family and group (e.g., King, 1959), but for some psychiatric patients the resemblance intensifies rather than soothes fears about joining (Wolf, 1949). Money-Kyrle (1950) stresses that the idea of "family" includes fantasied images of a good mother and bad mother, a good father and bad father, as well as realistic appraisals.

From another point of view, the group provokes cognitive problems. In the first contact with a group, particularly if this is also the first meeting of the group as then composed, the individual faces a novel, unstructured situation made up of strangers (Bach, 1954; Kaplan and Roman, 1963; Schwartz and Wolf, 1963; Severinghaus and Igersheimer, 1964; Slater, 1966), with heightened stimulus value due to the complexity of the objects and relationships in the field (Fried, 1965). Mills (1967) has outlined the difficulties of entering into various levels of group life (interaction and emotion, normative level, identification with the group goal, identification with the group's future), and the dilemmas of the executive function of sharing responsibility for the group's actions, an individual function which always must be exercised with incomplete knowledge and control of situations. Semrad et al. (1963) suggest further that a group is constantly threatened by disintegration and loss, in the mind of the member, because of the difficulty of maintaining contact with

numerous others.

In the study cited above, Stock suggests that close contact with other persons is always frightening. Content for this fear might be summarized as the combination of experiencing basic human needs for others with anxiety about getting that which one needs. Noting another type of anxiety, Bach believes that most group therapists in relating to a group often become aware of a "strong and mostly irrational fear that the herd might trample down man's precious individuality" (1954, p. 318), such a fear arising from experience with a group which was felt as a coercive mass with some mysterious power over the individual. Durkin's idea that the group is experienced as like the preoedipal mother also relies on her experience that group therapists, for example, become aware of a primitive narcissistic fear of those who are different from oneself.

The difficulties in joining due to fears about the group thus arise from a number of levels of experience and development; much the same can be said for the attractions of group life.

Thus, a comprehensive account of an individual's reaction to a group would refer to preoedipal experiences with the mother, early family experience, social groups in childhood, adolescence and adulthood, favored defensive styles, as well as consideration of the specific nature of the group being joined, in the light of these factors. This issue will not be addressed in any detail in this paper, but it is worth remembering that the real characteristics of a group can serve to encourage specific transferences, identifications, displacements, or evocation of particular early images.

Elements of regression can be readily seen in the examples given

above, although not all the responses to groups are regressive. Some are based on conscious memories and realistic appraisals of the current situation; some of the regressions do not involve such early or primitive behavior as others. For example, experiencing the current group as like the family group is a reaction stemming from a later period than experiencing the group as a collection of internal objects and part objects. Finally, both positive and negative evaluations of the group may have regressive elements.

CHAPTER SIX

THE REGRESSIVE REACTION

It is possible to perceive and react to a situation, familiar or unfamiliar, in a variety of ways. A setting may be perceived as an opportunity for gratification or growth, or as a threat, or both; one's reaction is usually a compromise between wishes and conflicts aroused by the situation, and defenses and adaptational functions, which may also be enhanced or undermined by the situation. Furthermore, the perception of the situation, or the response, may be inappropriate to the external reality (Schur, 1953). One possible response to a stressful encounter, such as joining a group, is regression to earlier or more primitive modes of functioning, or from secondary to primary process.

There is general agreement that groups can produce a variety of primitive or regressive responses in individuals. This is particularly true in groups which lack structure by their very nature, e.g., mobs, groups which are unstructured by design, like self-study groups, and in early meetings of groups which will develop structure and norms over time, as do therapy groups. Whitaker and Lieberman (1964), for example, describe a number of interpersonal and intrapsychic phenomena in groups which might be termed regressions from mature object relations and ego functioning. These include scape-goating, pressures toward conformity, magical exculpation for one's own deeds through the initiatory act another (Radl, 1942), the compelling quality of affects or decisions felt

by a majority of members, and the use of projective solutions (members share the assumption that only one of them has the impulse). They conceptualize the contagion effect in groups as a shared affect which emerges so quickly that one is unaware of the associative links. Though individual contributions to group affects or acts may vary, and collaboration is required to create these or carry them out, the impact of the group is experienced as unitary. All of these contribute to a fear of losing control over one's identity and actions. Whitman (1964) has also noted regression in T-groups to processes characteristic of adolescent gang formation (ingroup/outgroup, jargon, jokes about sex).

In addition, many authors have noted evidence of primary process, magical thinking, poor reality perception, and extreme dependency on a leader occurring in small groups, especially in early sessions (Bradford, 1964; Gibbard and Hartman, 1973; Herbert and Trist, 1953; Klein and Gould, 1973; Osberg and Berliner, 1956; Slater, 1966; Stoute, 1950; Thelen and Dickerman, 1949; Turquet, 1974; Winter, 1974).

As noted by Scheidlinger (1968), when Freud (1921) considered group phenomena, he was mainly concerned to explain mob psychology and the functioning of individuals in authoritarian organizations such as the army or the church. He suggested that the tie between members, or the cohesiveness of a group, is based on a particular type of identification among members based on their perception of each other as sharing a common quality. This quality can be the fact that all have a libidinal tie to the leader. This tie to the leader may also contain elements of the subject's tie to the hypnotist. That is, the hypnotist takes the place of the subject's ego ideal in his or her psychic organization, and is valued as such. The group then would consist of members with the same person in place of their ego ideals, which creates the bond between members.

This would represent a regression from individuation and differentiation, and from mature object relations with other members and the leader.

Dependency on the leader and the other characteristics Freud lists (lack of initiative, lack of emotional restraint, weakness in intellectual ability, tendency to act out, predominance of unconscious emotional life) lead him to characterize such group phenomena as regressive, and to suggest that group formation represents a regression.

The regressive element in one's response to group membership may vary in degree and in kind. As Schur (1953) has noted, both the evaluation of a situation and the reaction to that evaluation may be regressive. Thus, the group could produce regressive characteristics in members in several ways: (1) A regressive evaluation of the group as more dangerous than it is in reality, because of primary process thinking in the evaluation, e.g., equating the group with some object or situation which has been threatening to life, identity or homeostasis in the past; (2) An accurate appraisal of the danger in the group followed by a regressive response to that danger. An example of this would be a member who correctly evaluates the group as threatening to some of his or her characteristic modes of obtaining gratification, but who then reacts with behavior characteristic of earlier periods of his life, acute anxiety attacks, complete withdrawal, panic, shock, preparation for fight or flight. The contagion often noted in groups could then amplify this. Final possibilities would be an accurate evaluation of the threat in group membership, which might be anxiety-producing, with the appropriate level of anxiety response to the situation, e.g., signal anxiety; or a regressive perception of the group coupled with a regressive response to that perception. The danger perceived may be physical threat, the threat of inter-systemic conflicts, or of flooding by internal stimuli,

Scheidlinger (1952a, 1952b, 1955, 1964, 1968, 1974) has made a careful conceptual study of the dynamic processes occurring in groups, attempting to separate individual and collective phenomena. In his series of papers on group process, he has summarized and critiqued many of the major group theorists, and discussed the application of Freud's concepts to group process and group therapy also (e.g., Scheidlinger, 1952a, 1952b). He has stressed the need to discriminate pathological regression from regression in the service of the ego in groups and to note the position or level of functioning to which one regresses as well as the type of regression. He criticizes Bion, among others, for failing to take into account individual differences in susceptibility to the regressive pull of the group.

Scheidlinger's main contribution in this area has been his utilization of the concept of regression in the service of the ego to account for some of the regressive phenomena in groups, and to set forth in detail a hypothesis about the process. This occurs mainly through a particular type of identification, which is the concept Scheidlinger uses to organize the individual member's "perception and attitudes toward the group as a whole." This is an identification because it is "an endopsychic process calling for a degree of individual involvement with a perceived object or its symbolic representation" (1968, p. 13) and it is distinct from transference, which to Scheidlinger connotes a recreation of a true object relation from a later period in childhood. In the individual identification with the group entity, two processes are entailed:

- (1) the ascribing to the group of an emotional meaning, as a conscious instrument of need satisfaction, or, on the unconscious level, as the state of unconflicted well-being represented in the exclusive union with the preoedipal mother; and
- (2) the giving up of an element of 'self' to the group (1968, p. 14).

This second factor causes the individual to react to attributes of the group as if they were his or her own, because he or she has relinquished an aspect of personal identity to the group (1966, p. 419). This seems an example of the sort of experience which could lead to feelings of loss of identity in the group, although Scheidlinger criticizes Bion for implying that what occurs is psychotic depersonalization.

Scheidlinger stresses the adaptive value of these experiences in group formative regression, which contributes to group cohesiveness and an individual sense of comfort and belonging. The identification with the group of which he speaks involves seeing the group as an instrument for need satisfaction, on one level, and as a mother symbol on a deeper level.

In one paper on this subject, the concept of the group seen as mother, Scheidlinger (1974) reviews the literature in this area and develops his own hypothesis further. He rejects Klein's timetable for infant development, but accepts Jacobson's (1964) and Anna Freud's (1965) discussions of early stages in the mother-infant relationship. Freud's term primary narcissism refers to the stage where the infant is unaware of existences separate from his or her own; there is no difference between self and object representation. Secondary narcissism refers to the stage of developing object constancy, where an external object can be psychologically related as separate. To reach this milestone, the infant must have developed ego functions of memory and perception and some organization of these in order to discriminate between the self and the object.

. . . The infant's transition from primary narcissism to secondary narcissism calls for some degree of reality-geared representations of self and of the maternal object and the perception of the latter as the source of tension relief and of need gratification (Scheidlinger, 1974, pp. 420-421).

This specific acknowledgment of the role played by ego functions is characteristic of Scheidlinger. Bion, in contrast, describes fantasies, but tends to discuss the regression of functions only in general terms.

The need-satisfying relationship postulated by Anna Freud falls between these two points in development, primary and secondary narcissism. It is still characterized by the child's self centeredness and "symbiotic perception of the mother as a gratifier of needs" (Scheidlinger, p. 420), but it does acknowledge some differentiation in self and object representations. The mother's need-satisfying functions are her most salient characteristics to the child, but she is perceived as separate when she is there providing satisfaction. However, the object representation of mother is not stable enough to exist in her absence or outside the context of need. Scheidlinger cites Jacobson, who comments that the child feels a conflict between the wish to maintain this dependency relation, and forces to mature and function independently, through much of early childhood.

In the light of this discussion, Scheidlinger restates his hypothesis about the way in which the group is perceived as a mother. The group is seen as the mother of this need-satisfying stage of development, a state of unconflicted well-being to which the members wish to return. He stresses that this is a positively felt state, and that regression in the group to activation of this wish, and some fantasy level fulfillment of it in perception of the group as mother, can be extremely useful in the formative stages of therapy groups.

Scheidlinger (1968) does outline some possible causes for regression in the early stages of unstructured groups but does not choose any one as more plausible. Intrapsychic anxieties, such as Bion describes,

interpersonal tensions (e.g. Semrad et al, 1963; Whitaker and Lieberman, 1974) or frustration of the desire for an exclusive relationship with the leader or central figure (e.g., Redl, 1949; Arsenian et al, 1962) may create the regression.

For Scheidlinger the regression is definitely one to a primitive type of functioning, but it is not necessarily a pathological process. He stresses that this is not a transference reaction, because in his terms transference is a recreation of an object-relation which took place after object constancy was achieved. His statement of this position is provocative:

. . . The regressive emotional pulls which characterize the early group formative stages in unstructured groups tend to loosen the individual's self boundaries and to reactivate primitive wishes and modes of early object relations, including identifications. Such regressive patterns are not necessarily pathological in so far as even in the most mature personalities the infantile, need-satisfying modes of relating persist and are subject to reactivation at moments of threat and anxiety (1974, p. 422).

CHAPTER SEVEN

AMBIVALENCE

Although Scheidlinger believes that perception of the group as a maternal entity is a positive experience, he does note Jacobson's comment that once the child has reached the need-satisfying object relationship, a conflict arises between the wish to stay at this point and the forces of maturation towards independent functioning. The aspects of group life summarized as "the good group" and "the bad group" also suggest that a member experiences conflict about membership at least initially. Members may fear social rejection by the group, while hoping for satisfaction of their needs for human contact. Apprehending the group is a difficult task, for cognitive, perceptual and emotional reasons; the group provides an unpleasantly accessible arena for reproduction of relations among the individual members' internal object representations, while remaining an unknown other as a whole. Unconscious fantasies which equate the group with the preoedipal mother recreate fears of loss of omnipotence and individuality, and fear of the hostility one projected onto part-object representations of the mother as an infant, as well as seeming to offer a blissful reunion with the mother in the reactivation of an all-good, merged, self-object image. Thus, there are dual sets of expectations about the group, and of mental representations stimulated by it.

The resulting reaction in the individual includes mixed feelings

about the act of joining the group, which may be conscious or preconscious, but the relationship to the group-as-a-whole, which is partly an unconscious reaction, is characterized by ambivalence. Here I am using the term ambivalence to refer to conflicting wishes (e.g., need vs. hate) toward a single object, the group. That the group is perceived on some level as a single entity to which one must relate has been testified to by numerous writers, many of whom are cited above. This perception is due in part to the difficulty of immediately apprehending such a complex aggregate in its differentiated aspects, cognitively (keeping track of names, roles, faces, histories) and emotionally (relating to a number of other individual persons and subgroupings of individuals). But Bion's position is that this apparent regression to an oversimplified perception has further implications; the fantasy that "a group" exists, rather than a mere collection of individuals, is part of the unconscious fantasy that the group represents an early mother image, tenuously apprehended as unitary. This maternal image is itself one which derives from a collection of part object representations, whose integration is a developmental milestone. Thus perception of the group or mother as unitary can itself be imbued with conflict.

It is important also to note that reference to "the group" as a single entity always implies a subjective experience on the part of an actual or potential member.

In accusing Bion of the "group mind" fallacy, Scheidlinger (1960) emphasizes the inaccuracy of referring to a group as if it really had a single unitary mind or unconscious; collaboration between members is required to create this impression. While Bion's prose may be interpreted as worthy of this criticism at times, overall, Bion does not lose sight of

individual responsibility for participation in, and contributions to, group life. Whitaker and Lieberman's (1964) discussion of this point states that group therapists and consultants often speak of "The Group" in a way which implies it is a single actor, or a single undifferentiated mass, because often its impact on the therapist (or, I would add, on the member) is experienced as unitary. The member feels the impact of a collection which may exclude him or her, or have a shared history which is perceived as unitary. This impact remains the result of various individual contributions to the activity taken and emotions experienced by others. However, Whitaker and Lieberman claim to range themselves with Bion, Ezriel (1950) and Foulkes (1957) in believing that patient experiences in therapy groups partly derive from participation in group forces. For this claim to be consistent with explanations based on individual responsibility, it must refer to the idea that the number of individual contributions and interactions in groups and the individual fantasies, have a powerful effect on the single member. This effect is less clear outside the context of a specific group, although societal and institutional groups may also reveal similar effects in an indirect way.

Scheidlinger's two factors in group participation can be fitted into Bion's Kleinian framework although Bion himself was not so careful in describing the group experience. Ascription of meaning to the group as a whole as a symbol, e.g., as a symbolic mother, parallels Bion's claim that members regularly perceive the group as a single entity and give it symbolic meanings in unconscious fantasies. Scheidlinger also refers to "the establishment of a sense of unity with the group or with some aspect of it" as constituting a primitive identification dating from a relatively undifferentiated stage in the development of the

personality (1960, p. 356). The second factor, that of relinquishing some aspect of one's personal identity to the group, sounds like projective identification, and could certainly be conceptualized as part of a container-contained model.

Slater (1966) has eloquently described the vicissitudes of wishes for fusion with, and individuation out of, the group which is first experienced as an undifferentiated mass. At first, he states, others are noted only as transference figures; more prominent is the shared perception of the group as an undifferentiated whole. (However, Scheidlinger points out how unlikely it is that the fantasies are identical in every respect, or that transferences are the only relationships activated.) Members are unaware of this sharing, but as soon as an individual acts on this unconscious perception, others respond unconsciously on the basis of their shared fantasy perceptions, and all then feel a loss of individual distinctiveness. This experience of envelopment by the group, and consequent confusion about the sources of affects and reactions, leads members to feel "swept away by forces that seem to come both from within and from without" (Slater, 1966, p. 179). The impression that one's unconscious percepts are the same as those of others leads to this confusion because it implies a loosening of distinctions between minds. And, Slater continues,

. . . the psychological experience of emotional submersion in a group tends to ignite in the individual the fantasy of merging with, or being devoured by, the mother, which in turn is associated with loss of consciousness and death. There is nothing mystical about this; the emergence of consciousness is for most human beings inextricably intertwined with separation from the mother, and the individual need have no memory of this process in order to associate them (p. 187).

As noted above, the loss of individuality possible in the group is both desired and feared. Loss of individuality and sense of merging with others can be pleasurable because it relieves the tension required

to maintain boundaries, separateness, and responsibility. Whereas the development of a self-mother boundary entails the recognition that one is not omnipotent, the fantasy of re-entering the undifferentiated state implies that one regains this lost omnipotence. A confusion about boundaries is feared, however, because merging with the mother suggests loss of consciousness and death, or the threat of being devoured by the mother.

However, Slater's claim is not that members experience a complete (and therefore psychotic) confusion about self boundaries, but that members fear such a state arising from their sense that others share their unconscious images. Awareness of a self boundary remains to the extent that the individual experiences this fear. The power of the fear stems from its association with the state of recent differentiation, when boundaries were new and weak and separateness from the mother was liable to collapse.

To put this in terms of object relations theory, the fear is associated with early object representations of the self and mother as different and at least partially separate, an achievement with positive and negative implications for the developing ego. The self is then able to be seen as separate from the mother on whom aggression has been projected and who may be experienced as harshly controlling. This is a step toward maturation and independence, but the fantasies of omnipotence derived from experiences of the mother's power and responsiveness are curtailed and the painful recognition of one's limitations begins.

For Slater, the group develops as conscious bonds, and shared conscious experiences replace the simultaneous experiencing of similar unconscious percepts, and as members learn a new context for individual

and group identity and distinctiveness. Changes in self awareness, and awareness of the group, are also changes in boundary awareness as one becomes integrated into the group. The leader is an early focus of attention because he or she epitomizes separateness from as well as integration into the group -- he or she is individuated but still a part of the group. Thus, revolt against the leader, and concern with depending on a leader, represent early attempts at differentiation within the group; fight-flight culture is somewhat more differentiated by its oppositionalism; and pairing basic assumption groups are the most differentiated of the basic assumption groups, since they allow for more individuation of members.

While Slater translated Bion's basic group assumptions into a developmental schema, based on individuation and separation, Gibbard and Hartman (1973; Hartman and Gibbard 1973, 1974a, 1974b; Gibbard, 1974), have focused on the transformations in boundary awareness implied by the basic assumptions, and especially by the characteristic fantasies of Tavistock and training groups. Changes in this boundary awareness require different individual and group-level activities for adjustment to them. In developing this idea, Hartman and Gibbard speculate that changes in group structure, and use of different basic assumptions, arise from the ego-state distress which results from changes in the equilibrium of group boundaries. Ego-state distress refers to painful affects associated with many social experiences (e.g. anxiety, depression, guilt), which were studied as indicators of the stability of the boundary regulatory systems (reported in Hartman and Gibbard, 1974a).

Hartman and Gibbard's discussion of the theoretical basis of their research on ego-state distress in small groups is central to the position which is being developed in this work, and thus will be presented

at length. Hartman and Gibbard begin with Bion's assumption: in Tavistock and training groups, where ambiguity about the task and structure prevails, "the initial situation causes anxiety and a concomitant regression" (1974a, p. 141). They refer to Scheidlinger's distinction between a normal, group formative regression occurring in such groups as well as in group therapy, and neurotic regression. Group regression results in the use of primitive forms of splitting, introjection and projection which are usually associated with very early periods of life or severe psychopathology (cf. Kernberg, 1975a). In the early stages of a group, therefore, attempts to draw a boundary around the group resemble the formation of the "purified pleasure ego" (Freud, 1915): all the goodness is inside, all the badness outside. These exclusion attempts gradually result in guilt and reformation in attempts to assimilate the leader and all the members -- some of whom may have been scapegoated earlier.

Finally, more individual differentiation is allowed in the group, and sexual and other rivalries and oedipal issues arise, with the termination of the group ushering in another regression where a last attempt to create a wholly good group is made. Hartman and Gibbard's conclusion is that

the foundation of group development is boundary establishment, boundary maintenance, and boundary transformation. The intrapsychic processes of introjection and projection on a group-wide basis lead to the formation of psychic boundaries and other group structures -- differentiated roles, hierarchies, ideologies. These processes and structures, in turn, can be viewed as ways of experiencing, expressing, containing, and neutralizing potentially disruptive and disorganizing effects. . . . Psychotic anxiety in Jacques' terms or ego-state distress in ours is a symptom of the larger issue of boundary maintenance . . . which we believe to be fundamental to group structure and to group process (1974a, pp. 174-175).

The fantasies characteristic of small groups can be interpreted as reflecting various solutions to the boundary problems posed by group

membership and to the problem of ambivalence and the conflict between wishes and fears. As Gibbard (1974) puts it, the desired solution is that "unity and uniqueness could coexist without contradiction" (p. 263). Hartman and Gibbard (1974b) list examples which can be recognized by anyone who has participated in a small self analytic group. The first fantasy, of mystical fusion, is usually unconscious, and appears at the beginning of the group because boundaries are tenuous and their dissolution is an issue. Its aims are tranquility and the fullness of the early mother-child symbiosis, and the warding off of hunger, emptiness, chaos, conflict and the pain of differentiation and ambivalence.

The next common fantasy to appear is some type of deification of the leader, or Bion's dependency basic assumption. At first goodness is projected onto the leader; then, disappointment inevitable from the unreality of the projection (and, Klein would add, the resulting feelings of emptiness in the members), rage and frustration develop, and the leader is seen as the source of negative experiences. In the resolution of this fantasy, Gibbard and Hartman imply, more accurate appraisals of reality and of individual differences are allowed.

"Utopianism" is a fantasy that the positive aspects of the group' can be split from its negative aspects, and seems to be a slightly more advanced derivative of the fusion fantasies, since it receives conscious elaboration. Hartman and Gibbard feel that the aura of hope in this depends on an unconscious fantasy that the group is indeed a nurturing, maternal entity, or some facet of one. The negative aspects of this fantasy ("engulfment, malevolence, obliteration of self-object boundaries," p. 320) and of the group experience (competition, aggression, sexual rivalries) are well defended against in the conscious utopian fantasy so

that simultaneous experience of good and bad aspects of the group, and thus a painful ambivalence, are avoided. The positive aspects--possibilities for intimacy, equality and harmony--are stressed. This is comparable to the positive, preambivalent symbiosis between mother and child. As a position taken regressively in response to the group experience, this type of symbiosis seems to be a compromise between the fusion fantasy which implies total loss of boundaries, and the pain of recognizing one's separateness and relative impotence. Hartman and Gibbard note, however, the tendency to admit some roles in the playing out of the utopian fantasy, for example, one member must present himself or herself as overtly needy, so that the group as a whole can act nurturantly. This seems close to the need-satisfying object relationship with the mother which Scheidlinger postulated members regress to; Scheidlinger would argue that the perception is unconflicted, but I think this is unlikely.

Finally, there is the messianic fantasy, related to Bion's pairing basic assumption. Here roles are explicitly admitted, and the hope for the messiah is one for new life and purpose, the positive results to be obtained from resolution of oedipal issues. Defensively, this fantasy functions to ward off oedipal guilt, and to deny feelings of loss around the ending of the group. The termination may also be handled in a more regressive way, with fantasies of undifferentiated fusion since dissolution of group boundaries is approaching. Related to the messianic fantasy is the bisexual fantasy which Hartman and Gibbard (1974) identified in one of their groups. This is a fantasized pairing within the self, imagined as both masculine and feminine, and by implication, complete in itself. It confuses sexual and dependent needs, and sexual identity, and seems to serve as a defense against oedipal, heterosexual wishes and fears, as well

as denying dependency on others. Thus, in Hartman and Gibbard's experience, it appeared when the group was threatened with dissolution. They label it a "symbiotic pairing fantasy" -- there is a regressed form of pairing, with the self and object only partially, not fully, differentiated. They also suggest that the use of roles, especially in these last two fantasies, serves as a defense against the feelings of boundarilessness which characterize initial small study group sessions.

Holder (1975) has been critical of the use of the term ambivalence to refer to any type of conflict, and the mixed feelings about group membership are in part a conflict about an action. But the evidence from the experience of many group workers is that unconscious fantasy and primary process thought, and some subjective experience, involve the group as a single entity, a single object of some sort which would rightfully be termed an object of ambivalence. Hartman and Gibbard take this approach in seeing some group phenomena as defenses against this painful ambivalence which is analogous to that of childhood stages to which the individual is assumed to have regressed in seeing the group this way. In this context it is interesting to note that in Klein's developmental scheme (e.g., Klein, 1935, 1948, 1963; Segal, 1973), ambivalence is an achievement of the depressive position. In the depressive position, the infant eventually recognizes and relates to a whole object, with both good and bad aspects, in contrast to the part-object relatedness of earlier positions characterized by splitting of the object into its "good" and "bad" aspects. Some sort of recognition of separation from the mother and delineation of ego boundaries is implied by this achievement. The individual's ambivalence about the object is a source of anxiety to him or her because he or she fears the effect of his or her destructive

impulses on the object, once it is perceived as the single target of his or her good and bad feelings. "Depressive anxiety" is fear about one's effect on the needed object, in contrast to "paranoid-schizoid anxiety," which is fear of annihilation of the ego, stemming from an earlier developmental stage. While both types of anxiety, which are considered psychotic anxieties by Klein, may be initially experienced by group members, depressive anxiety characterizes the dilemma of wishing to join a group despite one's fears. The reaction to simple paranoid-schizoid anxiety would be withdrawal from the group.

While Scheidlinger (1974), in his discussion of Gibbard and Hartman's work, prefers to retain his view that the unconscious perception of the group as maternal is positive and unconflicted, I would support Gibbard and Hartman's, and Slater's conclusions. The evocation of early object and part object representations includes the possibility of negative as well as positive self and object images; for example, hostility projected onto images of the mother is one source of frightening representations. Even the self and object representations associated with the normal stage of need gratification mark only a tenuous differentiation from earlier fused images. These fused images can be of an all-good self-object or they can represent destructive re-engulfment, a possibility which develops once differentiation has occurred.

Thus, conflict and ambivalence in the individual are generated through group contact on several levels. Consciously, the group may be perceived as supportive, rejecting, or as an entity with which interactions are complex and difficult. At less aware levels, it stimulates ideas of a gratifying union, and the possibility of being devoured; of symbiotic nurturance, and retaliation from split-off part objects onto which infantile

sadism was projected. That similar mental representations, from the same developmental period, can be experienced either as gratifying or terrifying is one locus for the ambivalence; a second is the realization that the good and bad images represent a single object, and reflect the complexity of the individual's fantasies with respect to the object.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SYSTEMS AND BOUNDARIES

Rice (1969) has made the suggestion, adopted by Kernberg (1973), that the individual can be analyzed as an open system in the way in which a group or organization is studied. As an open system, the person carries out transactions with his or her environment, across the boundary distinguishing them, importing and exporting materials necessary to his or her survival as an individual.

The primary task of the individual is to satisfy the instinctual and object-oriented needs of his internal world by means of interactions with his social environment, adapting to and creatively modifying his interpersonal world in terms of his intrapsychic needs, and elaborating intrapsychic needs in terms of external reality (Kernberg, 1973, p. 374).

This view of the person as an open system in relationship to the environment makes Kernberg an interactionist.

The boundary is what separates a system from its environment, yet transactions must occur across it so that what was once outside becomes inside. Thus, boundary control and maintenance are crucial functions in the management of a system. For the individual, boundary control includes distinguishing reality from fantasy and admitting reality into the system in some form as experience. According to this view, for Rice and Kernberg, if an institutional boundary is inadequately placed or maintained, the resulting confusion will lead to inefficiency or failure in the organization; similar boundary problems in the individual lead to mental distress or

breakdown.

Control of boundaries, between self and other, reality and fantasy, is necessary for activity, consisting of the interactions with the environment necessary to life, to take place. Failure to maintain these boundaries indicates mental distress or psychosis. However, in new situations, new persons, roles and expectations must be integrated into one's previous conceptions of reality, and thus admitted inside one's mental boundaries.

In the healthy adult, the ego maintains the boundary separating the self from the outside world because it "can differentiate between what is real in the outside world and what is projected onto it from 'inside', between what should be accepted and incorporated into experience and what should be rejected" (Rice, 1969, p. 574). These processes probably occur at conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels. Rice also proposed that in transactions with other systems which may constitute the environment, efficiency and success are determined "by the extent to which the groups [or, by implication, persons] involved have to defend themselves against uncertainty about the integrity of their boundaries" (p. 565). For a transaction between two systems, or between an enterprise and its environment, to take place safely, measures are necessary for the protection of the system boundaries which will be crossed, for any such crossing threatens them. The exchange requires momentary "opening" of the boundaries and the potential for their weakening. That is, implied in every transaction is a real threat of boundary dissolution and uncertainty about location of contents and reality. If disaster is the complete loss of familiar boundaries, Rice suggests, every transaction contains the potential for disaster.

The individual who makes contact with an aggregate of other individuals whom he or she wishes to join, even if only momentarily, faces the problem of a transaction across boundaries maintained by his or her ego: new information must be taken in, along with possibilities for taking new roles, or developing slightly different self-representations in the new context. As Rice states, for many transactions, social conventions act as procedural safeguards in boundary maintenance. When these are not present, much of the interchange must be devoted to their establishment. For example, there is more initial anxiety evoked in less structured groups; anxiety intensifies after social conventions such as introductions have been exhausted, and when it becomes clear that the leader's contributions to structure are at an end (i.e., in groups where the leader makes some opening announcements). Thus, in therapy, training, and self-study groups, and in other groups which lack sufficient structure at any time, the individual is confronted with the necessity of controlling transactions across his or her boundaries with an unstructured whole, the limits of which may not always be clear.

On the broadest level, one must decide whether to enter the group and participate in its basic assumption and work life, from the inside. The group also reacts to having its boundary crossed by a new member. Members may feel that they exist "on" the boundary at times as they try to limit their participation while seeking the possibilities of belonging. The position of the leader is very much at the boundary, as Miller and Rice (1967), and Turquet (1974), have described. Part of the leader's function is to manage transactions and relations between the group and the larger system(s) in which it resides, that is, to manage boundary contacts and crossings.

As described above, the group is experienced by the individual as an unknown mass of great cognitive and emotional complexity which may not be initially differentiable, and the group may appear as an overwhelming confusion. In attempting to cope with this new piece of reality, the ego tries to rely on its customary defenses and techniques, but in the groups under discussion here, the support of social conventions for these efforts ultimately vanishes. The person faces anew the problem of deciding what is real, what aspects of the new situations are to be admitted to experience, what productions may be entrusted to the group, what map of reality will serve as a guide for action. In its management function, the ego needs to create new arrangements of representations of objects, the internal changes which are entailed by these, and to test appropriate criteria for reality in the complex and potentially overwhelming situation.

The maintenance of the self-world boundary image, which requires effort in any situation, is here more difficult because the person is reminded of the first differentiation between self and not-self. This distinction is one of the developmental tasks of infancy and childhood, successful completion of which is necessary for psychological health. Yet it always retains some of its earlier tenuousness. Given our inability to know directly anything but our own sensations and ideas, the distinction is always somewhat arbitrary (cf. Money-Kyrle, 1955), constituting a working hypothesis. In recreating this distinction, earlier, insufficient attempts may be re-enacted, and the mental representations and fantasies of the earlier period may be used to deal with the present situation, along with primitive defensive processes. In line with Slater, Hartman and Gibbard, I would suggest that a perceived threat of disintegration of

self boundaries occurs in joining a small unstructured group. Its cognitive and affective complexity, and tendency to encourage projection of conflicts between internal objects onto external persons in the group, threaten the maintenance of self boundaries and the boundaries of object representations. This creates anxiety about psychosis, a total loss of boundaries between self and others, reality and fantasy. The fact that the group is a multiple entity, comprised of many whole objects, which is experienced subjectively as one, contributes to the possibilities of confusion.

Ambivalence, even if experienced only on an unconscious level, complicates the individual's problem of establishing an ego boundary which will allow transactions with the group, and which will allow him or her to consider his or her own the actions he or she takes in it. The momentary, reversible fluidity of ego boundaries required for the drawing of new ones contributes to the activation of less differentiated self and object images in early group contacts. The difficulty for the individual lies in finding a position with respect to the group which will adequately relate him or her to it so that neither anxieties nor satisfactions in it will render him or her incapable of realistic activity and the work for which the group has convened.

PART III

INTEGRATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

CHAPTER NINE

THOUGHT AND FANTASY

Concepts

In Bion's account of cognition (chapter four), what is the status of terms like psychotic anxiety and basic assumption life? They seem to be theoretical terms in his explanation of group phenomena, for example, "basic assumption life is an attempt to avoid experiencing psychotic anxiety." Their connection to reality would be through rules of evidence relating certain manifestations of anxiety (e.g., Hartman and Gibbard, 1974a), reported individual fantasies, sequences of contributions (verbal and nonverbal) by members, and styles of thinking and working in groups, to the theoretical terms. To provide the beginning of a theory for the theoretical terms, Bion (1959a) sketches a protomental system from which the various basic assumptions appear, depending on the presence of other unspecified conditions. The protomental system represents another theoretical construct, although Bion refers to its existence in rather vague terms at times as if it actually exists in the group or individual.

But Bion's account of group life is not truly a theory, which would have clearly defined constructs, hypotheses, rules of relationship between the constructs, and rules for interpreting the abstract system (Nagel, 1961). It is, I think, a set of constructs, some borrowed from other work, which would be called concepts in Bion's scheme of stages of

cognition. Some of these concepts are psychotic anxiety, basic assumption, regression, thinking-knowing, fantasy, representation, projective identification. I would add symbiosis, ambivalence, and boundary (one of Bion's terms is contact-barrier [1962a]). As Bion presents them, the concepts are insufficiently organized to form a theory, although they may suggest a model for part of a theory yet to be articulated. However, they do provide a means to represent and analyze experience, in a way which has been found useful by persons working with groups.

In Bion's typology of thinking, the concept is between the conception and the scientific deductive system. A conception results from a fulfilled expectation of some event in reality, with the implication that this event may be expected to recur. A concept is a more abstracted form of conception, with a more general area of expectation, less tied to concrete events. It can be used to express (more general) truths, or to seek them. Concepts become part of a scientific deductive system when they are logically organized into hypotheses and systems of hypotheses. With these added relationships, the scientific deductive system is more than the sum of the concepts and separate relations it includes. It also functions as a preconception, and accrues meaning. However, when it is used as an exploratory tool, readjustments become necessary because its internal consistency may be threatened as it becomes more universal.

Although examples of these types of thinking can occur outside the hierarchical order in a single subject, once all of them have been achieved, something is implied by the hierarchy. With normal development, the relation between each and its follower becomes one of expectation, anticipation or predilection to match certain aspects of reality. As the stages proceed, the expectations are more flexible and less concrete,

unless pathology intervenes and reverses this tendency. Also, if a preconception, for example, mates with a memory, rather than with a realization, it becomes a "saturated element (similar to a beta-element) to prevent growth or catastrophic change" (1967, p. 150).

The relationship between types is also characterized by the container-contained dynamic. The concept can contain the meanings of the conception, while still allowing for further realizations because of its unsaturated nature. The deductive system contains the concepts, but also anticipates a broader range of realizations, some of which may not yet be known.

Bion (1963) has discussed the process of naming in terms of what he calls the selected fact, after Poincaré (1952). This is the recognition or discovery of a constant conjunction of events which seems to give order to a larger set of phenomena. The selected fact is named as an abbreviation for this experience, where one suddenly perceives organization, with a resulting economy and elegance of description and analysis. Bion suggests that making a theory is one version of this process: one perceives and names some apparently constant conjunctions to make order and economy. The name contains the fact of the perceived associations and order, and is then available to be contained in a more comprehensive theory (the "name" of a larger system). The name or theory remains unsaturated, however; that is, the container is not "filled" by the conjunctions and meanings but retains the outlook of expectation for further alteration, or use in a larger system. The name, or theory, can represent some entity, some experience (it "holds a place"), but this is not simply a static equivalence. It is an attempt to bind or contain phenomena which allows still the appearance of more approximations to the name or noted conjunction.

Thus, imperfect approximations may be thought about or assimilated in some way and need not be ignored because they are imperfect. This provides for growth and change.

It would seem that each of the categories of cognition Bion describes could function in this way, in order of increasing abstraction. In particular, for this discussion, the concept would be the fact of certain constant conjunctions experienced and selected for naming. Making a concept like basic assumption life would be a way to organize experience in a way which seems to give elegance and economy to consideration of the phenomena contained in the term. Viewed from his own categories, then, Bion's (1959a) description of group life is an attempt to select facts which will result in a more orderly and parsimonious way of describing and analyzing group phenomena.

Although they are not fully organized into a system, the facts selected for Bion's concepts do imply some relationships among themselves by the nature of their definitions. Although a complete and orderly set of relationships in the form of hypotheses is part of the level of thinking of the scientific deductive systems, the other types may imply interrelationships in limited sets. This is consistent with their nature as "theories" on a smaller scale, insofar as giving a name and making a theory are similar processes. In Bion's definition, a theory is a name of a high level of abstraction which attempts to organize experiences systematically. The preceding stages of thought are seen by Bion as similar in function although not identical, so they too may include connections to other thoughts, in less organized systems.

The Subject and Reality

An account of thinking must consider what relationships to reality,

if any, will be implied by cognition in that system. Bion is a constructionist in his account of stages of thinking, and his contention that knowing is an activity, not a state. There is an interaction between experiences of the environment which the subject has, and the subject's own preconceptions, expectations, and readiness to assimilate certain realizations, and approximations to preconceptions. However, the results of this are always affected by the subject's previous concepts; there is no undistorted contact with reality in itself in ordinary knowing and thinking. This is the position espoused by Klein and Kernberg, and stated more precisely by Piaget:

To my way of thinking, knowing an object does not mean copying it--it means acting upon it. It means constructing systems of transformations which can be carried out on or with this object. Knowing reality means constructing systems of transformations that correspond, more or less adequately, to reality. The transformational structures of which knowledge consists are not copies of the transformations in reality; they are simply possible isomorphic models among which experience can enable us to choose. Knowledge, then, is a system of transformations that become progressively adequate (1971, p. 15).

. . . We . . . have held that contact with experience is something subtle and higher towards which we strive, but which at first is all the more difficult of attainment in that previous subjective and egocentric connections interpose themselves between things and the mind (1931, p. 138).

Bion (1962a) does leave open the possibility of a somewhat mystical knowing of true reality under circumstances more difficult to achieve.

From this viewpoint, it becomes an issue to what extent human thought and knowledge can truly reflect experience. Rapaport (1951) answered this question by suggesting that the need to achieve gratification in reality provides derivative motivations which lead to knowledge of more of the world than just the need-satisfying objects. In his view, thinking and action serve drive gratification but also have some autonomy

which guarantees that valid knowledge of the world will be possible.

But Rapaport, too, states that because this autonomy is relative, knowledge is limited and never infallible, consisting in progressive approximations, as it does for Piaget, Klein, and Bion.

Another issue in this problem is the distinction or boundary between the knower and the known, the implications of which will be discussed in a later chapter. In Spencer Brown's (1969) assessment of this problem, the distinction must be made for the purpose of observation, but it guarantees that what is then known will never be complete.

Bion is also concerned with problems in knowing and making theories about entities with the quality of life. He feels that science has been most successful in constructing theories for inanimate objects, but that there is difficulty in applying parallel attempts to animate objects, which grow and have emotions. Most of the terms used in theories about human beings have already been used to give mechanistic accounts, and thus carry associations which interfere with the need to express also the quality of being alive and changing. Bion further believes that an emotional experience is not apprehended directly by the senses, as there are no such sense data for emotions as there are for concrete objects.

Thought and Fantasy

While Bion does not give a scientific deductive system for a group theory, he does specify some relationships between concepts which have implications for understanding group experience. One of his contributions has been to elaborate the Kleinian idea that fantasy and thinking functions are related and influence each other. Bion's description of basic assumption life suggests that this mutual influence is also a part of group experience. The implications of this will be detailed in the

final chapters, since Bion did not elaborate this point in his group writings or return to do so later after beginning his work on thinking.

Most authors assume that fantasy and reality oriented thinking are separate functions: two approaches to dealing with consensual reality. The other views described in Part II do not challenge this distinction. They list possible fantasies that one may have in groups, or see produced in a group; it may be inferred that strongly-held fantasies would interfere with perception of reality, but there is no hint that the actual process of knowing or thinking is involved. Scheidlinger (e.g. 1955, 1960) alludes to ego functions and different levels of perception of the group, but usually with the meaning that the fantasies occur, and one reacts to them as well as to the group. One also has conscious expectations, apart from regressive reactions, and the discussion of these conscious, rational aspects of the attitude toward a group is one of Scheidlinger's main contributions. It fills a gap Bion leaves in this area.

What Bion does, based on Klein, is to suggest that the thinking function itself is degraded in group contact along with the regression, anxiety, appeal of basic assumption participation, and the primitive fantasies and defenses evoked. This is consistent with his and Klein's ideas about the development of representational, mature thinking and thoughts.

In this account, thoughts and fantasies seem to arise from a common matrix. At first, thoughts are indistinguishable from fantasies of things inside one, and are dealt with by fantasies of introjective and projective identification. As described in chapters three and four, fantasies express some experience of the world and thus are a way of approaching reality. They may gradually become better representations

of reality, through the development of symbolism and the achievement of the depressive position. Then they may be used for thinking, which is usually a better way to cope with social reality. At the same time, more or less primitive fantasies, including ones about fantasied internal objects, remain along with their more accurate replacements. What is more, fantasies about the meaning of thinking and knowing can affect these processes as well as influencing thoughts.

Some of Bion's descriptions of projective identification exemplify this idea that fantasy and thought are, at first, undifferentiated. He claims that projective identification is a primitive form of thinking. It is the type of fantasy used to cope with the experience associated with the fantasy of having internal objects instead of thoughts. Projective identification can also be used for the purposes of knowing reality. This occurs when it is viewed as the mechanism ♀♂ by which names come to contain facts and meaning, which are "projected" into the name as a container; it may also be used to elaborate thoughts.

There are other, normal ways in which fantasies become part of thoughts. Bion (1962a) distinguishes models from abstract representations in one of his discussions of knowing. This is in the context, also, of creating theories, for example, theories about thinking. A model, in Bion's definition, has concrete images, memories, and past associations, and its elements are linked by a narrative which may imply causality. Because of its concrete and historical aspects, it is firmly related to reality. However, this connection can become a danger, when concreteness becomes more salient than other aspects, or uses to which the model is put. If this occurs, words may be used as things in themselves, rather

than as parts of a model. Models are generally made from thoughts in the category of dream thoughts and myths (1967, p. 141), which have more concreteness and narrative implied; they are useful in part because they are disposable.

An abstract representation, on the other hand, is directed toward the future rather than the past, and has lost the particular concrete images of the model. Its elements are not linked by a narrative but are deliberately combined to reveal relationships. More than the model, the abstract representation functions as a preconception. As such it accumulates meaning and may require further adjustment.

Both model making and abstract representation are used in knowing activity, especially the activity which Bion would term making "theories" about experience, the model being used when more concreteness is felt to be needed by the person to cope with the current experience.

For example, the experience of thinking, knowing, and having thoughts, may be modeled on the auditory system (noise and music), as a way to classify, name and contain the experience for further use. Experience of the auditory system is an emotional one from which the person abstracts and integrates elements which may be used for models of other processes. With more abstraction, the experience may also be represented so that it becomes a theoretical deductive system. The problem is that the model may intrude without notice because it is part of ordinary forms of speech. For example, the idea of "thinking clearly" suggests a sensuous model. Models also retain emotional aspects of the experiences from which they derive, which restricts their application, or interferes with their use for new explorations.

Thus, model making is an example of thinking which is influenced

by memories of past events, emotions, wishes and fantasies, sometimes in a very concrete way, but not necessarily so. However, Bion claims that fantasies can also be viewed as models. In some cases, fantasies are "the present day survivals of what were once models that the patient formed to match his emotional experience" (1962a, p. 104). For example, the private oedipus myth enables one to understand the relationship to one's parents, and their relationship (1963, pp. 45, 66). Each element must be understood in terms of the others and their implications, even though this is a narrative organization and not a system of hypotheses. Therefore, fantasies may be created by a sort of thinking process as models to assimilate experience, and they then may continue to influence later theories and models, including theories of thinking. This is consistent with Bion's concerns about the difficulty of directly knowing reality, even the reality of one's own thinking processes. Insofar as the models, fantasies and abstractions can be specified, however, even if this requires some self-reference in use of terms, more experience can be assimilated and analyzed, and the goal of knowing reality comes closer.

The final chapters will deal with the integration of thought and fantasy, and the implications of these, in the group experience. Concepts like ambivalence, symbiosis, boundary, and container-contained will be seen to be examples of this connection between thought and fantasy which seems to help organize group phenomena.

CHAPTER TEN

CONFLICT, REGRESSION AND BASIC ASSUMPTION LIFE

Bion's Hypotheses

It seems difficult to account for the changes in mood and activity of individual members in a group with just the fact of number added to individual psychology. The array of phenomena called group process or group forces, like contagion, often leads to the postulation of extra-individual entities such as group mind. But this must be understood to be a purely hypothetical term, or a model not intended to have actual correspondence in reality. I believe Bion intends his use of the term in the latter sense, for otherwise Scheidlinger's (1960) criticism on this point would apply. That is, the existence of such an entity would be hard to prove.

However, group phenomena remain to be explained. There seem to be two related, general approaches to this. One is Bion's assumption that these are innate human characteristics having to do with participation in groups: people are born with a facility for basic assumption life. The group process effects are always potential, or are occurring unnoticed, but membership in a group of convenient size makes them obvious. Bion uses here a parallel to psychoanalysis--transference is a human propensity (which, I would add, goes on throughout life in some form) manifested with most clarity in the circumstances of a psychoanalysis. When a number of persons are present to make a group, this does not create a wholly new event

called group process; it merely makes visible something potential.

The second approach is to stress the regression which occurs in group settings, and to specify primitive processes activated in this regression which could account for the anxieties and vagaries of group life. This is the line taken by most group theorists, and Bion includes it with his use of the first assumption. The problem with this hypothesis used alone is that profound regression can be evoked in other situations. To explain the special nature of the regressive reaction in a group, which results in contagion effects and other group processes, one must then appeal to the factor of number of objects in the field.

Although Bion uses the concept of regression to account for some group phenomena, such as fantasies about the group as a whole, its use with regard to basic assumption life is more complex. If one accepts Bion's hypothesis that a tendency to join in basic assumption life exists in everyone, and that such participation occurs in many situations, though it is most clear in unstructured groups, then one is speaking of an activation of some potential. This is consistent with Bion's model of thinking, and Kernberg's description of the reactivation, under certain circumstances, of self-object-affect units from another period of life. The idea that these other representations, and even ways of being (as in basic assumption life), continue to exist along with other modes and representations, is fundamental to Bion's approach.

It is important to stress that Bion sees an interaction between the individual and the collection of persons perceived as a group in the person's environment. The individual is not merely a function of the group, nor is the group a total illusion in the minds of members, or only the sum of isolated contributions. But it is as a result of individual

contributions and fantasies that a group may be seen to exist and act. Members share fantasies and are witness to the same objective experiences in the group, although they also react individually. The group may be felt to be an overwhelming, unitary mass, but this occurs through the members' actions, thoughts and fantasies, and individual tendencies to basic assumption participation. On the individual level alone, there is also an interaction between cognitive functions and conscious expectations, and unconscious or irrational experiences. Members are also linked to each other through these experiences: if the group as a whole is fantasized by each member to be a mother image, the other members become parts of that image.

From Bion's axiom of innate group-related tendencies, there follows the assertion that conflict is fundamental to group membership.

The individual is a group animal at war, not simply with the group, but with himself for being a group animal and with those aspects of his personability that constitute his "groupishness" (Bion, 1959a, p. 118).

Some aspects of this conflict are similar to those described in chapters five and seven. These include the individual's need for both privacy and companionship, for intimacy and apartness; in short, to exist as an individual with a separate, preferably unique identity, without being deprived of the rewards of feeling that one belongs to a larger system. Slater, Gibbard and Hartman have described the powerful wish to have both alternatives at once, to find a way to have group unity and individual uniqueness coexist without compromise. Perfect solutions to this problem appear only in fantasy.

The Development of Psychotic Anxiety and Basic Assumptions

As noted above, Bion postulates regression as integral to group

life.

I hope to show that in this contact with the complexities of life in a group the adult resorts, in what may be a massive regression, to mechanisms described by Melanie Klein (1931, [1930], 1946) as typical of the earliest phases of mental life. The adult must establish contact with the emotional life of the group in which he lives; this task would appear to be as formidable to the adult as the relationship with the breast appears to be to the infant, and the failure to meet the demands of this task is revealed in his regression. The belief that a group exists, as distinct from an aggregate of individuals, is an essential part of this regression, as are also the characteristics with which the supposed group is endowed by the individual. Substance is given to the fantasy that the group exists by the fact that the regression involves the individual in a loss of his "individual distinctiveness" (Freud, 1921, p. 9 [p.86]), indistinguishable from depersonalization, and therefore obscures observation that the aggregate is of individuals (Bion, 1959a, pp. 127-128).

Freud (1921) describes the loss of individual distinctiveness on entry into an "unorganized" group as the loss of the individual's "own continuity, his self-consciousness, his traditions and customs, his own particular functions and positions . . . " (p. 86). It is unclear what degree of depersonalization, if any, Freud intended by this and Bion also implies that some sense of one's individual characteristics remains to place one in conflict with basic assumption life despite wishes to merge with the group in some way. Thus, his use of the term "depersonalization" here is vague.

A part of the regression of which Bion speaks seems to be to oedipal conflicts, and oedipal material and figures can be discerned in group discussions and productions (p. 147). However, the group is also identified with even more primitive, part objects, like those comprising the "bizarre primal scene" fantasies which Klein (1928, 1945) has discovered in individual analysis. The fantasies seem "to assume that a part of one parent, the breast or the mother's body, contains amongst other

objects a part of the father" (Bion, 1959a, p. 149). Thus, the idea of rationally examining and therefore working with the group of which one is a member provokes anxiety, because the group is regressively identified with a collection of primitive part objects. As Bion puts it:

My impression is that the group approximates too closely, in minds of the individuals composing it, to very primitive fantasies about the contents of the mother's body (Melanie Klein). The attempt to make a rational investigation of the dynamics of the group is therefore perturbed by fears, and mechanisms for dealing with them, that are characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position (Bion, 1959a, p. 147).

Paranoid-schizoid anxiety is one type of psychotic anxiety; other mechanisms characteristic of this early period, which includes the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, are splitting, introjection and projection, and projective identification.

Thus, the perception of the group is, on one level, regressive from the onset, in that the group is seen as a collection of past objects comprising the preoedipal mother's body, or a bizarre primal scene. This perception allows the actualization of psychotic anxiety and other primitive processes. Another result may be the reactivation of the experience in infancy that one is not really responsible, that things just happen. According to Bion, human beings also have innate tendencies for participation in group life, and this inclination is expressed in a facility for basic assumption activity. " . . . Group mental life is essential to the full life of the individual quite apart from any temporary or specific need . . . " (Bion, 1959a, p. 45).

Inborn ease of participation makes basic assumption life attractive to members, and heightens the conflict discussed in preceding chapters. In the basic assumption group, one

. . . discovers that his capacity for cooperation is emotionally most vital in the basic [assumption] group, and that, in the pursuit of objectives that do not easily lend themselves to the techniques of the basic group [e. g., work], his ability to cooperate is dependent on a kind of give and take that is achieved with great difficulty compared with the swift emotional response that comes of acquiescence in the emotions of the basic group (Bion, 1959a, p. 79).

Participating in basic assumption activity requires no training, experience, or mental development. It is instantaneous, inevitable and instinctive . . . In contrast with work-group function basic-assumption activity makes no demands on the individual for a capacity to cooperate but depends on the individual's possession of what I call valency--a term I borrow from the physicists to express a capacity for instantaneous involuntary combination of one individual with another for sharing and acting on a basic assumption (p. 139).

Basic assumption life is automatic and comfortable: "something like arriving fully equipped as an adult fitted by instinct to know without training or development exactly how to live and move and have his being in a group" (p. 78). This compares favorably with the hardships of learning from experience through development and the pains of growth, and with the difficulties of using a scientific or even a questioning attitude. This difficult task is what the work group, and the rational desires of the members, attempt, all the time coping with the pull of the basic assumptions.

The refusal to suffer the pain of development and learning from experience is a central feature of basic assumption life. The passage of time, with its intimations of mortality and lost possibilities, is not recognized. Urges to development are met with hostility (pp. 143-4). In this state, even verbal communication is not used rationally, but as a mode of action (p. 170); magic replaces science (p. 73). Use of symbols for reasoned exchange, an investigative attitude, and the beginnings of

scientific method are all functions of the work group, rather than the basic assumption group. Bion even suggests that individuals enmeshed in pure basic assumption culture, like some psychotic individuals or very young children, are unable to form symbols (p. 171). Furthermore, anonymity, evasion and denial of individual responsibility seem possible in the basic assumption group.

From this description it can be seen that basic assumption participation will ultimately result in frustration. Despite the pleasures of belonging to a group and stressing membership over individual differences, a wish for individual distinctiveness and achievement persists. In the extreme case, the person feels it is necessary to utterly reject the group in order to establish his or her independence and separateness.

Less drastically, the individual may feel somewhat alienated from a basic assumption while participating in it. There is security in basic assumption participation, but each basic assumption expresses only certain emotions, wishes and fantasies. Other feelings must be split off or projected elsewhere to maintain the basic assumption, and the unity of the group experience. Uncomfortable impulses may be ascribed to sources outside the group, for example, to insure the feeling that the group is good. The individual's own abilities may be ascribed to the group so that one is freed from the responsibility of choosing how to use one's capacities in the group setting, and attempting to influence group actions. Similarly, introjection and identification may be used to foster feelings of similarity and mutual support and cohesion.

These processes sustain the basic assumptions, but they simultaneously provide impetus for change and conflict. Individual differences continue to exist despite the push toward unity and similarity. Distress gradually

appears in members who experience differences between their feelings and the predominant mood of the group, and cease to find participation in a particular basic assumption comfortable. This may be due to variations in susceptibility to group effects, for example, to the primitive fantasies which accompany basic assumptions consciously or unconsciously. Or, some may wish to maintain an emotional state at odds with that of the current basic assumption. When this occurs, the person is subjected to powerful pressures from the dominant basic assumption mentality.

Also, the nature of the basic assumption itself is anxiety producing. Each has characteristic fantasies which allude to primitive representations of the self and other objects, particularly the mother. Once again, identification of group roles, persons and events with part objects, part object relationships and conflicts occurs. The basic assumption itself becomes responsible for increasing, rather than decreasing psychotic anxiety, and a change in basic assumption takes place. This pattern is repeated unless some sort of equilibrium occurs, where work makes use of basic assumption emotions and fantasies in a sophisticated, or at least a stable, way.

Another source of conflict between the individual and the group stems from the fact that the member's conscious, adult, rational needs and capabilities continue to exist despite basic assumption participation, although they may be held in abeyance. Denial, disavowal or projection of parts of oneself can become a source of frustration and feelings of loss. Members may recall their wish to perform the task for which the group was formed. The work group develops as more individuals attempt to use intellectual and scientific methods to replace fantasy, belief in magic and accomplishment without pain. But even the work group is not purely

intellectual and scientific; the basic assumptions always intrude, and the best accomplishment is a compromise, or sophisticated, intelligent use of the basic assumption.

Bion sees the conflict as inescapable. When a member tries to reject basic assumption life, several consequences follow. The member may feel lonely and unsupported because of withdrawal from the group's emotional vitality; he or she may also suffer feelings of loss and deprivation because parts of the self had been ascribed to the group from which he or she is attempting to take distance.

Bion also refers to a feeling of persecution by one's internal objects, if one strives to take a purely intellectual outlook as a group member. What this seems to mean is that the attempt is always doomed to failure: some connection to the emotional life of the group always remains and will be felt unconsciously no matter what conscious strivings may be. The connection is in part due to the tendency to perceive the group as a reproduction in reality of one's internal object world, or to perceive it regressively as representing part object conceptions of a preoedipal mother figure.

There is a final reason for conflict about group membership, according to Bion. The group stimulates wishes for gratification of different types on different levels (see chapter five), and then the group is partially responsible for frustration of these wishes. This is due to the complexities of group life, which have been discussed earlier and it is also due, Bion claims, to the very primitive fears the group evokes. The associated regressive processes one observes in oneself and in others, and the anxieties provoked by regressive perceptions of the group, inhibit attempts to fulfill one's needs.

Bion's implication is that these perceptions can never be entirely avoided, or disavowed, or neutralized; the best one can achieve is a compromise between intellect, and the appeal of basic assumption participation and the related primitive processes and perceptions. What is also likely to occur is an alternation between points on a continuum between pure basic assumption life, and a purely scientific approach to the purpose for which the group has formed. In Bion's terms, the individual seeks gratification for his or her group related needs in entering a group and joining in basic assumption mentality, but is simultaneously gratified and frustrated in the actuality of the group experience. There is conflict between the basic assumption forces, which result from members' wishes to participate in this way, and individual members' other wishes to have different feelings or to use other abilities. Compromise results in a group culture, which has at the same time marks of the dominant basic assumption, and evidence of attempts at rational thinking and planning, and allowance for individual distinctiveness. When basic assumption mentality predominates, the culture will be a thinly disguised version of one of the fantasies given some structure or substance in reality. When the scientific outlook and rational desire to accomplish a task predominate, without denial of the group-induced pressure and emotions, a structure which allows for both aspects of human life in groups will be arranged. Task accomplishment will not always be comfortable, because development is always accompanied by pain and the frustration of incomplete knowledge and control, but it is possible.

Regression

When Bion refers to the adult task of making contact with the emotional life of the group, he seems to mean the task of living and

working in a group despite the many faceted conflict inherent in man's group nature, or evoked by the possibilities of the group. The task is immediately made difficult by this conflict, and by the tendency to perceive and appraise the group regressively. The fantasy that a group exists as a single entity, rather than as an aggregate of individual persons, is one example of an evaluation of the situation which oversimplifies and fails to comprehend the actual complexity.

Bion's use of the concept of regression here is in a Kleinian context. He is referring to a more primitive period than the level of regression to neurotic family and oedipal issues Freud (1921) and Slater (1966) discuss, and to more primitive, complex mechanisms than the shared libidinal tie to a leader which Freud suggests to account for phenomena in certain types of groups. Bion implies that even the functions of perception and evaluation of the group are immediately and heavily influenced by primary process thinking, equating the group to part object images which evoke psychotic anxiety.

In the Kleinian system primitive images and fantasies are seen as continuing to coexist with more accurate representations of objects, and more conflict-free operation of ego functions. Also, every individual experiences psychotic anxiety in childhood states to which one may regress.

. . . I also found that in the earliest phases of development the child normally passes through anxiety situations of a psychotic character. If, whether for external or internal reasons, those early situations are activated to a high degree, the child may exhibit psychotic traits (Klein, 1932a, p. 155).

I assume, however, that even under favorable conditions, terrifying figures in the deep layers of the unconscious make themselves felt when internal or external pressure is extreme. People who are on the whole stable--and that means that they have firmly established their good object and therefore are

closely identified with it--can overcome this intrusion of the deeper unconscious into their ego and regain their stability. In neurotic, and still more in psychotic individuals, the struggle against such dangers threatening from the deep layers of the unconscious is to some extent constant and part of their instability or their illness (1958, p. 243).

These terrifying figures of part objects may be re-evoked in the group situation with accompanying psychotic anxiety.

Kernberg's explanation of the regression apparent in groups deals with the degree of structure present in the situation, and with his hypotheses about the internalization of object relations in the form of self-object-affect units. The presence of obviously regressive processes in the group is directly proportional to the lack of structure in the setting; organizational or cultural norms and procedures support customary neurotic and normal defenses. The factor of number, that is, the presence of several other persons to whom one must relate in these conditions, also contributes to the regression. This is due to the ease with which this collection of whole objects (persons) can be used as an arena which one may use for projective identification of one's internal objects or part objects and parts of the self, and their relationships and conflicts.

Impressive clinical evidence exists which indicates that, regardless of the degree of maturity and psychological integration of the individual, small, closed, unstructured groups--as well as large groups with minimal structure--tend to bring about an immediate regression of the individuals involved, toward the activation of defensive operations and interpersonal processes that reflect primitive object-relationships.

In other words, a potential exists in all of us for activation of primitive levels of psychological functioning when the ordinary social structure is lost, when suspension of ordinary social roles occurs, and when multiple objects are present simultaneously in an unstructured relationship (thus reproducing in the interpersonal field a multiplicity of primitive, intrapsychic object-relationships) (Kernberg, 1973, p. 368).

The reactivation of primitive self-object-affect units entails regressive emotions and perceptions of the self, as well as of the objects present; this is implied in the characteristic basic assumption fantasies but Kernberg's work is more specific about this. In line with Kleinian concepts, Kernberg assumes that primitive self-object-affect units continue to exist and can be reactivated under certain conditions; this is clear in his theory of countertransference. The primitive internalized object relationships are then re-enacted, in part, with the group.

Scheidlinger's (1968) discussion of regression in small groups has been reported above (see chapter six). He particularly stresses the adaptive values of this regression, which can be 'group formative', leading to an increase in members' sense of comfort and of belonging to a cohesive group. As a regression in the service of the ego, it may usefully allow a member to feel identified with a good entity, that is, with a group perceived as good. This good group is invested with emotional meaning as an avenue for gratification of one's social needs, and on a less conscious level, as a type of "good mother" symbol. The relationship between member and group recreated here is that of the child, and mother perceived as need-satisfying object, somewhere between primary narcissism and object constancy. This is supposed to be a state of unconflicted well-being. In his 1974 paper on this, Scheidlinger agrees with Kernberg and Klein that such primitive ways of relating continue to exist in mature adults but may be reactivated "at moments of threat and anxiety" (Scheidlinger, 1974, p. 422).

While most of Bion's account stresses the psychotic anxiety and fear experienced in the regressive response to a group, Scheidlinger's work stresses as firmly the positive aspects of identifying the group with

an early mother image. Scheidlinger's account seems one sided in view of other literature, while Bion's discussions of the conflict inherent in group membership are not extended in this area (except, perhaps, in the dependency assumption), making his propositions also seem biased. That is, Bion describes the reaction to the group as a reaction to a terrifying maternal image. It seems desirable to use the descriptions Scheidlinger and others (e.g. Slater, Gibbard and Hartman) have given of pleasurable fantasies and feelings about the group as a mother symbol to fill this gap in Bion's account. This view of the group as offering possibilities for pleasurable fantasies about a mother image would be consistent with the assertion that human beings are attracted to the ease of basic assumption life, where the pains of individuality and responsibility seem to be avoided.

Furthermore, the two sets of views of the group--gratifying and terrifying--can be seen as replacing each other in turn as each eventually evokes anxiety because of its primitive nature. Scheidlinger's own statement about the regressive reactivation of the need-satisfying object relation, with some entity representing the mother, is that it tends to occur at moments of threat and anxiety. But Slater, Gibbard and Hartman have described how this positive type of perception of the group as mother may lead to fears of being engulfed by the preoedipal mother, from whom one was only recently differentiated. Durkin (1964) also elaborates this fear.

The regression which individuals experience in groups can then be seen as a product of conflict. Difficulties in relating to the group and in working at the task for which one has become a member are extensive. In Bion's terms, the initial failure due to the complexity of the task is

accompanied by regression, the effects of which are specified by many authors. Scheidlinger emphasizes the potentially adaptive value of this group formative regression, which may be a regression in the service of the ego, rather than a pathological one; it is also to be differentiated from a regression which is a part of therapy. Features of the regression are the use of primitive mental processes; identifications with the group as a whole, primitive projection and projective identification, and splitting, and regressive perception and evaluation of the group. In this the group is inaccurately perceived as unitary, and seen unconsciously as a collection of part objects which were internalized during the correspondingly early periods. Although Bion does not make Scheidlinger's distinctions, he implies that some of the regressive reactivation of fantasies about internal objects may be a way of being in contact with the emotional life of the group, so that he might agree to the usefulness of some aspects of the regression.

Basic assumption life is Bion's term for the state characterized by these features. Although he applies it to groups as a unitary phenomenon, in the light of his views on individual responsibility, it too must be seen as the result of personal contributions. These contributions stem in part, however, from the aspect of personality which is man's group nature, which makes basic assumption participation pleasurable.

Psychotic anxiety is a reaction to the regressive evaluation of the group, and use of it as an arena for projection of one's fantasied internal objects and the relationships between them and the self. Some of the resulting fantasies about the group are terrifying, and result in psychotic anxiety and the primitive processes described above, as well as in basic assumption life, which is an attempt to defend against the

anxiety through the use of the processes.

There is another element in all of this, however. As Scheidlinger (1968) has made clear, often the use of the term regression stops at one definition or fails to clarify what type of regression is occurring. Bion's account of basic assumption life and psychotic anxiety seems to involve topographical regression, possibly instinctual regression, and regression of psychic content. But Bion's descriptions imply that regression in ego functioning also occurs, particularly in the way thought and language are used.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THINKING IN THE GROUP

One way to look at Klein's emphasis on the importance of early fantasy is to assume that personal meaning begins to develop from birth. Even ordinary functions which all human infants experience accrue meaning, at first in very primitive, non-verbal forms, as sensori-motor schemas, patterns of concrete experience, and the forerunners of self-object-affect units. In particular, representations of the self and objects develop through phases where they are parts of fantasies which represent the child's current "understanding" of his or her experience. Through the transformations of experience and maturation, and the achievement of the depressive position and of object constancy, these representations gradually come to be fairly accurate reflections of the real objects. At the same time, appraisal of reality with less interference from one's fantasies proceeds. This is the position taken by P. Kernberg, O. Kernberg, Isaacs and Klein (chapter three).

The assumption that fantasy accompanies even the earliest representations (if they can be termed representations in such a primitive period), impulses and actions, however, means that the maturational process sketched above will be influenced by these fantasies, and by the meanings given events. In the present context it is important to recognize that this means that the very process of thinking has a history replete with fantasies and meanings which are not ordinarily available to the normal adult, nor are they necessarily meanings which are rational or supportive

of the mature uses to which thinking is put. Similarly, some representations have passed through a period where they were felt to be internal objects: they began as a fantasy of the loved, needed, or feared part object inside one. The final point to be made here is that in this context, which is utilized by Bion, the primitive representations or fantasies of internal objects, and fantasies about processes and events, do not disappear when their transformed versions are created and gradually used to the exclusion of their predecessors. They may continue to exert influence in the realm of unconscious meaning, and thus create symptoms or character traits, or they may be more actively and completely re-evoked in certain types of situations. Then the person behaves more extensively as if he or she believed a certain fantasy event was occurring. One acts as if he or she were a particular self experiencing the associated emotions toward the event and towards other persons seen as taking the roles of the re-evoked object images.

In contact with a group, according to Bion, a regression occurs which results in renewed prominence being given to primitive mental processes and fantasies, even in normal persons. The activities of knowing the group, or thinking about the group, are affected by primitive fantasies about knowing and thinking activity, and by regressive perception of the group in terms of early part-images of the mother. The act of trying to learn about the group realistically is given the meaning of attempting to know about the contents of the mother's body in early infancy; thinking activity regresses to an earlier form with its associated fantasies and emotions.

In Klein's view, knowing the mother in early infancy derives from an epistemophilic urge, but a sadistic impulse may contaminate this. The

wish to know the contents of the mother's body could include not only a wish to explore, but also wishes to control and possess and orally incorporate an envied object or part object. Thus, oral sadistic fantasies, and later guilt about these from the depressive position, may accompany the desire to rationally learn about the group. According to Klein oedipal guilt is also experienced at this stage. The fantasied contents of the mother's body are viewed fearfully, because of projected aggression, so that possession of them, or knowing about them, is imbued with anxiety. This creates a general dread of the unknown in the group and reluctance to ask even questions which one might reasonably assume to be answerable.

The regression which results in the presence of such unconscious fantasies in the group is also responsible for distortions of the thinking process itself. Bion's account of thinking starts with the necessity in infancy of dealing with frustrating accretions of stimuli. The mothering person could help with these, if he or she were present. Such frustrations become primitive thoughts, entities which are experienced as bad, concrete objects inside one. These must be ejected or modified somehow to reduce the unpleasant tension and frustration. If there is insufficient frustration tolerance, these elements remain unchanged: saturated beta elements, undigested sensory impressions lacking possibilities of change because they are not associated with expectation. They are felt to be objects which must be possessed and controlled, perhaps by evacuation, the mechanism for which is projective identification. Such "thoughts" about the part object mother, for example, are suitable only for these uses. One meaning which thinking has in this period is of putting things in the mother for her to transform. Later return to this stage results in the fantasy that knowing means a state of possessing pieces of something, rather than a type

of activity. This is one of the characteristics Bion ascribes to basic assumption life.

The consequence for group members of this use of "thoughts" is that thinking is degraded. Rather than accurate representations which are the basis for planning action and anticipating new occurrences, events, feelings and attempts at representing persons remain beta elements. The types of activity which can deal with these accretions are excessive projective identification, splitting, introjection and projection. Primitive idealization and fantasies of omnipotence and omniscience also result. In Bion's developmental scheme, projective identification is an early form of thinking, because it works on primitive thoughts of this type, and because it includes some kernel of contact with reality. When it becomes primary as here, it is a regressed form of thinking. These mechanisms are seen in the group along with a predictably associated sense of fragmentation, of being unable to think while caught up in a disconnected stream of events and emotions. The excessive use of projective and introjective mechanisms, and the fantasies of omniscience and omnipotence which can result, tend to create confusion about the boundaries between the self and others, or the self and the group as a whole. Confusion about responsibility and the possibilities of taking action, and disruption of reality testing, follow. Individual members may complain of feeling unable to think, or have fantasies of being filled with disorganized thoughts or pieces of people.

Capacity for frustration tolerance is an important variable in Bion's account of what occurs in groups as well as in his portrayal of thinking. When frustration cannot be acknowledged, sensory impressions associated with frustration become beta elements. If the possibility

that something exists which one does not possess can be tolerated, however, thoughts develop and are used for thinking about reality, in terms of expectations and actions to obtain the needed gratification. The initial contact with a group, and some subsequent attempts to fully deal with group life, are intensely frustrating to the individual because of the nature of the conflicts evoked: there is no complete solution to them. To become able to tolerate this conflict and frustration and work in a group is a difficult achievement. Before this is accomplished, regressive reactions to frustration as described above will occur. Projection of unwanted feelings, impulses or capabilities which would give one responsibility, assumption of omnipotence against the discomfort of helplessness, assumption of omniscience against the pain of limited knowledge and the admission that one does not possess all the requisite learning--these are reactions to frustration also.

As noted earlier, for Bion, thinking is an activity made possible by the achievement of the depressive position (chapter four). The depressive position is a stage where the integration of contradictory self and object images, and tolerance of ambivalence towards objects, becomes possible. O. Kernbert (1966, 1976) describes this integration as the coming together of libidinally and aggressively invested images of objects, or of the self. He narrowly defines splitting as a defense as the active separation of mutually contradictory self images, object images, introjections or identifications. Before the depressive position, splitting is normal; afterwards, it may be used defensively, for example, to avoid the anxiety which occurs when one realizes that the object one hates is also the object one needs or loves.

Bion's use of the concept of the depressive position is broader

than this. In his account of thinking, the development of representations as such coincides with the rise of thinking activity to use representations to plan action and anticipate reality. The use of a symbol implies the concept of an object which is not there, and it is this usage which Bion links to the depressive position. The object which is not there is associated with frustration, yet it must be represented in some positive way so that it may be thought about, and used as a libidinally invested expectation. If loved and gratifying objects must be thought of as separate from frustrating and needed ones, there could be no use of representations which implicitly combine these two aspects. Thinking activity is similarly a difficult accomplishment which requires frustration tolerance because it must find ways to reach gratifying states which are not presently being experienced. If fantasies of omnipotence or omniscience, or primitive idealizations, predominate, thinking activity to change the real world will be inaccurate and ineffective.

Regressions from mature thinking include these fantasies, and other possibilities described above. Regression to primitive projective or introjective techniques can be more fully understood in the context of splitting and the depressive position, however. One consequence of inability to tolerate the frustration of admitting a state where things are needed but not possessed, would be to treat the thoughts about these things as entities in themselves. Their representational nature would be denied, or defensively split off, because the frustration of having to cope with or modify reality could not be accepted at the time.

Another aspect of representational thought is the link between the object and its representation. This link is altered or broken in the examples of regressed or degraded thinking which have been given. Also,

links between one thought and the next must be used for thinking to be effective. To sustain this contact with reality is painful; contact with reality shows repeatedly that expectations are not perfectly met, and that further thinking work is necessary for gratification. The expectations may be met in painful or disappointing ways, or the wish for satisfaction may obstruct clear appraisal of reality. Bion describes one form of psychotic regression where symbols are created in aberrant ways, and where all acts are considered to be saturated symbols, rather than allowing for expectations of further transformations. In this case, the link with reality has been attacked. In other conditions, a fantasy may exist that the very apparatus for thinking and maintaining the link has been expelled, because contact with reality has been felt to be so painful. Then the person may attempt to induce others to think for him or her.

The original source of this link, in Bion's account, is the connection between mother and child. The infant must be able to tolerate and use this link to develop thinking and reality testing, among other accomplishments. The mother is seen as a receptacle for the products of projective mechanisms, who then performs alpha function on such inchoate beta elements or fantasied internal objects and returns them to the infant in more usable form. There are two aspects to this connection: the infant's tie to the mother who does all this, and the contact between the infant's fragmentary productions, and the mother as a container for them.

One implication of regressively perceiving the group as a mother image would thus be a possibility of re-enacting a wider range of early relationships with the mother. Some of these have been specifically described above. Here, Bion's claims about the development of thinking

might imply that the developmental process might be repeated in the group, not merely the regression alone. Scheidlinger (1974), Kernberg (1973), Hartman and Gibbard (1973, 1974a, b) and others have described other relationships to the mother which might be reproduced; the fact that several stages are described is consonant with the idea that in group development, positions parallel to stages in child development occur. For example, one attribute of basic assumptions seems to be their similarity to characteristic early fantasies about the mother. The dependency assumption could be traced to the infant's imaginary sharing in the mother's fantasied omnipotence. Fight or flight might correspond to more purely projective processes and splitting of good and bad aspects of the mother and self in order to maintain wholeness of and control over sources of goodness (cf. Freud's concept of the "purified pleasure ego", 1915). Gibbard and Hartman also see this as a way to ward off overwhelming fusion. Pairing could derive from the blissful symbiotic future of shared omnipotence or merging with the powerful good mother image which has been recognized as separate from and outside the self, with an independent existence which must be controlled, in contrast to the dependency fantasy which blurs this awareness.

The link to reality implied by symbolism and representational thought has another source, besides the mother, according to Kleinian views. Early symbolism partakes of numerous displacements of impulses and fears onto successively less frightening substitutes, a fact which indicates the usefulness of a certain level of anxiety. Thus, one origin of contact with a broader reality than one's immediate experiences, is fear. This could give a phobic cast to early uses of representational thought. It also could be one source for fear of the group: the actual development of

the concept "group" could be through displacement from the group of part objects felt to comprise the mother.

Kleinians also postulate that many early symbols are derived from experiences of one's own body, however. Such assimilations to oneself have the effect of libidinizing the rest of the world in an expansion of primary narcissism. This would balance the fearful connections due to displacement. Recall also that for Klein, fantasy is a relationship to reality. Fantasy assimilations of the world to one's body represent an early connection to reality which precedes mature reality testing. And, without symbols, one cannot fully relate to reality. The richness of multiple meanings to reality would be absent, and there would be no way to avoid anxieties about basic concerns, if anxiety could be felt at all. Representational thinking can also allow one to assess the reality of one's more frightening fantasies.

In order to work in the group, ambivalence and contact with reality must be tolerated, and splitting must be overcome. That these are not easy accomplishments is evidenced by the examples of regressive processes and fantasies in groups which have been described in previous chapters. Examples of splitting may occur on several levels. The individual member may perceive the group as bad, but himself or herself or a subgroup as good, or vice versa. On a broader level, the group and the self may be seen as good or bad, with the rest of society seen as the opposite. Here, membership alone takes on concrete, magical qualities: in extreme form it is the fantasy that a group exists which matters, not the activity and responsibility of the members. The admission that the group is neither perfectly lovable, nor totally hateful, is a difficult one.

The use of symbols to advance work in the group must also be consonant with public reality rather than idiosyncratic connections.

Bion's early exploration of thinking (1962b) ends with consideration of the possibilities available for coping with conceptions, thoughts, dream thoughts, alpha and beta elements. These possibilities are thinking, projective identification, omniscience, and finally, communication. Translating thought into action involves "publication, communication, and common sense" (p. 309).

Publication is here defined by Bion as referring to operations necessary to make an individual's private awareness public. It requires the solution of two types of problems: (1) technical, "the expression of thought or conception in language, or its counterpart in signs (p. 309);" and (2) emotional, deriving from a conflict between narcissism and need for others which is basic to human existence. The conflict arises from the fact that all human impulses are narcissistic, yet require expression of a social component for fulfillment.

Bion traces communication as having had the same history as Klein's account of the development of a relation to reality. He states that communication begins in realistic projective identification by the infant trying to induce in his or her mother the feelings he or she cannot tolerate and does not wish to have, so that the mother will deal with them. This communication may be sidetracked into excessive projective identification with a more extensive accompanying belief in omnipotence, or the process may develop into a capacity for some frustration tolerance so that mature integrated thoughts and thinking become possible. This positive outcome Bion attributes to a good relationship with the breast, that is, a relationship to reality in the form of the mother which has satisfactory components, and makes further relations to reality (e.g. the reality of one's own frustration) possible. Thus Bion claims, this development is not only a

personal one of becoming able to think, but is part of the capacity to be social.

Bion implies that communication retains the influence of its origin in projective identification, so that recipients of communication may feel persecuted, as if something were being projected onto them or into them. This is a motivation to increasing abstraction in human communication, to diminish the tendency to experience the communication concretely, as projectiles aimed at oneself. The attempt to pursue truth is felt to mean that one must contain the projections of others, while retaining a balanced outlook. Those who are perceived as able to do this, for example, the analyst in the psychoanalytic situation, says Bion, are objects of envy and hatred (1957, 1967).

In order for communication to be useful to the group as a whole, agreement about symbols must be present. Private definitions must be shared and subjected to group confirmation. Highly personal primitive, unconscious representations are less suited for this than the more abstract types of thought, which make more social interactions possible. At the same time, Bion claims, there is a temptation to use words as things, and language as action in basic assumption participation. This points to the paradoxical nature of participation in basic assumptions: although members may experience a pleasurable sense of being closely related to others in a shared basic assumption, the connection is through less conscious, less abstract, and ultimately, less social bonds. The idiosyncratic symbols and unconscious fantasies are not ordinarily tested and confirmed to be the same for all the members. This can occur only with work group attempts to use language and communication in a scientific way, to establish common descriptions of experience as a prelude to further work

personal one of becoming able to think, but is part of the capacity to be social.

Bion implies that communication retains the influence of its origin in projective identification, so that recipients of communication may feel persecuted, as if something were being projected onto them or into them. This is a motivation to increasing abstraction in human communication, to diminish the tendency to experience the communication concretely, as projectiles aimed at oneself. The attempt to pursue truth is felt to mean that one must contain the projections of others, while retaining a balanced outlook. Those who are perceived as able to do this, for example, the analyst in the psychoanalytic situation, says Bion, are objects of envy and hatred (1957, 1967).

In order for communication to be useful to the group as a whole, agreement about symbols must be present. Private definitions must be shared and subjected to group confirmation. Highly personal primitive, unconscious representations are less suited for this than the more abstract types of thought, which make more social interactions possible. At the same time, Bion claims, there is a temptation to use words as things, and language as action in basic assumption participation. This points to the paradoxical nature of participation in basic assumptions: although members may experience a pleasurable sense of being closely related to others in a shared basic assumption, the connection is through less conscious, less abstract, and ultimately, less social bonds. The idiosyncratic symbols and unconscious fantasies are not ordinarily tested and confirmed to be the same for all the members. This can occur only with work group attempts to use language and communication in a scientific way, to establish common descriptions of experience as a prelude to further work

and exploration.

Abstraction is one form of publication if it is used to ascertain if it represents other experiences than the one that was its immediate source. If it does so, "confidence" results (Bion, 1962, pp. 50-51). Concrete representations can also engender confidence if they facilitate testing by more than one sense, or by the senses of more than one person (common sense). An example of this would be a statement about astronomy which could be verified by any of a number of astronomers. Confidence is also associated with the condition where "more than one person in a group entertains what appears to be the same representation of an emotional experience" (p. 50). For this, publication and communication are necessary. This requires consensus about symbols, that is, consensus about the constant conjunctions which are contained by a name or a theory.

As noted earlier, the achievement of names used in representational ways is difficult for the individual. It is also one of his or her social achievements, however, since use of consensual names for things is part of the goal of representational thought. The idea of containing an experience in a name is also a reference to a more concrete fantasy or model. However, the container-contained model for abstract thought refers to an experience where there is no sensuous delimitation between the container and that which is contained. Issues of boundary maintenance, crossing, and confusion become important, because this boundary is also some sort of fantasy, thought, or mental activity.

CHAPTER TWELVE

GROUP CONTACT AS A BOUNDARY ISSUE

Boundaries and Regression

The achievement of the sense of a boundary between oneself and the rest of the animate and inanimate world is a developmental milestone only gradually attained. Various psychic processes employed later in life are also described in relation to an ego boundary or self boundary: for example, projection (Schafer, 1968b); projective identification (Kernberg, 1966, 1976), identification (Rapaport, 1957). Regression may also involve the re-experiencing of early self and object representations which were characterized by varying degrees of fusion of images and boundary fluidity. In particular, fantasies of symbiosis imply a lost or partially suspended sense of oneself as separate from the object.

The proposition that the regression experienced in a group involves fluidity of ego boundaries is advanced by a number of group theorists and clinicians, whose work has been outlined in earlier chapters. To recapitulate, Slater (1966) sees group members as experiencing fears of loss of ego boundaries and merging with others because the stage to which members regress in the group is that of recent differentiation. He believes that members feel their unconscious fantasies are shared by others, which leads to confusion about one's self boundaries. Hartman and Gibbard (e.g. 1973, 1974 a, b) see group development as related to individual anxiety about group and personal boundaries. Colman (1975)

places the regression at the period of "primitive group consciousness", where the symbiosis with the mother has been expanded to include other family members. In Kernberg's (1973) view, what is reactivated in the regression which takes place in the group is a fused, all-good self-object image; Scheidlinger (1974) places the regression point slightly later, at the stage of need-satisfaction. In this period the mother is perceived as a separate object in her own right only at certain times, when she is still seen as firmly connected to the infant. Scheidlinger does refer to a loosening of ego boundaries during group formative regression, however. This would seem to be a necessary part of his suggestion that one occurrence in the regression is the development of an identification with the group-as-a-whole. A similar suggestion has been made by Semrad et al. (1963), that assimilation of the group by the individual member is made possible by a "normal suspension" of ego boundaries. Scheidlinger also describes a relinquishing of individual attributes to the group, and reactivation of primitive wishes and modes of object relations, in terms similar to those used by Kernberg.

In Bion's account of group life, fluidity of ego boundaries is implied by a number of descriptions. Basic assumption mentality has been described: for the individual, it consists of an effortless sharing of thoughts, feelings, and unconscious fantasies, which could result in confusion about one's individual experience, as Slater suggests. Bion (1959a) implies that the regression involves a loss of some sense of one's distinctive characteristics. The demands of the task, and realistic constraints such as the passage of time, are ignored: an omnipotent or omniscient fantasy may replace the relationship to reality. Such fantasies deny the actual limits or boundaries to one's ability to affect reality.

Instead of learning from experience and realistically adapting to one's limitations, members share fantasy assumptions and tend to use projective mechanisms, rather than thinking processes, to deal with events. In pure basic assumption culture, work is impossible because action requires at least tenuous contact with reality. Activity to alter reality always results in renewed recognition of the frustrations of reality, and contact with this boundary to one's fantasies is avoided for that reason.

As Bion points out in his discussion of the development of thinking, primitive thought forms can be viewed as "undigested", unintegrated bits of experience which are experienced as concrete pieces of something. Primitive thinking activity consists in fantasies of containing, collecting or expelling these pieces in such a way that they do not make contact with reality. When they finally are enabled by frustration tolerance to do so, they are modified into more accurate and useful representations. At the same time, they can be used for anticipation and expectation, and the essentially painful process of thinking. In this contact, frustration is experienced along with the pleasures of increasing mastery over the environment. This mastery can never compare with the mastery one can have over one's fantasy world of internal objects, however.

The basic assumptions categorize relatively specific types of fantasies, examples of which have been described in detail by other authors (chapter seven). In the dependency basic assumption culture, members often imagine that a group leader or consultant will magically nurture and protect them; they see him or her as a godlike figure and themselves as lesser, relatively helpless beings. Fight-flight cultures still look for one person who will lead members to victory over or safety

from some external group or object--the institution, the Tavistock consultant (who is on the boundary), the non-members in the rest of society. Projections and paranoid descriptions of external events are common in this phase. The pairing basic assumption focuses on future bliss to avoid the pain of work in the present, and groups utilizing this assumption may construct utopian fantasies or encourage pairs of members to become sexually involved on the group's behalf, to bring forth the future bliss in person as a messiah.

Projective mechanisms occur in all these assumptions. Members ascribe their ability to work and take care of themselves to the leader in the dependency phases, their hostile impulses to outsiders in the fight-flight periods, and their own control over their futures to symbolic, fantasied representatives in the pairing culture. Projection is, of course, one defense which implies in its process a fluidity of ego boundaries--something which was internal becomes experienced as external (Schafer, 1968b).

Bion also contends that the very idea that a group exists is a fantasy. What exists is an aggregate of individual persons, which is experienced as unitary. In this experience internal boundaries between persons are blurred, and insofar as one perceives oneself as part of the unit, one's own boundaries must be affected.

Whitaker and Lieberman (1964) explain this unitary impact of the group as due to the rapidity with which identifications and similar emotions arise in the course of a group experience. Bion's conception is that the group resembles "the contents of the mother's body" in a preoedipal object image. These two explanations refer to different levels: Whitaker and Lieberman's to the mechanisms of the present group experience

alone, Bion's to the unconscious fantasies evoked by the experience. In addition, the phrase which Bion uses must be placed in a Kleinian context.

Perception of the preoedipal mother as a unitary, integrated, constant object is an accomplishment of some difficulty. Earlier representations of the mother are of split-off, part object mothers, which serve to keep gratifying, and frustrating and frightening aspects separate. With the achievement of ambivalence and integration in the depressive position, one person can be recognized as the origin of both positive and negative experiences. In Kernberg's (1975a) elaboration of Klein's scheme, libidinally invested self and object representations become integrated with aggressively derived ones to produce more realistic images of the self and other persons.

The development of an integrated percept of the mother as a whole object entails the drawing of a boundary around a collection of part object images with varying degrees of concreteness, ranging from fantasied internal object to relatively abstract representation. Also, "good" and "bad" entities must be collected and integrated within the same boundary. In Bion's conception, perception of the group as a unitary entity recreates aspects of this early developmental period. Implied by this are concerns about the boundaries of and between, the self and the mother and fantasies about them.

Knowledge as a Boundary Issue

In a more abstract way, knowing the other, whether the other is group or mother, presents a boundary issue. In its primitive or degraded form, Bion claims, knowing is a fantasy of possession of pieces of something, of incorporation into the self of certain internal objects or things experienced as having been taken inside, that is, within one's own

boundaries. This primitive fantasy about knowing is related to similar fantasies about thinking about the products of knowing: fantasies of digestion, for example. Such meanings of knowing and thinking activity gradually became less prominent and are replaced by less concrete ones as the person becomes able to use these processes in a relatively conflict-free way. They do remain available for expressions of conflict or anxiety aroused during regression in the group, for example.

The development of symbolism and thoughts about abstract representations, which are not experienced predominantly as concrete objects inside one, is a later event. This requires some of the achievements and integrations of the depressive position. Having or making a symbol implies that the idea of a good object which is not present, and is therefore frustrating, is possible. The symbol must originally be the object of considerable ambivalence, it would seem, since its history is as a more concrete (fantasy) object, while it must represent something which is not there. Bion also describes this as holding a place for the absent object, another spatial image. One may have conflicted feelings toward a placeholder. Furthermore, as noted previously, thinking about these symbols in order to obtain gratification and deal with reality is intrinsically frustrating as well as potentially gratifying, since the contact with reality reminds one that the good object is not present. The integration of good and bad aspects of the self, as well as of objects, in the depressive position, also deals a blow to the fantasy that a perfectly good self or object could be had. Increasing discrimination between the real and the possible, through the use of symbolic thought, disappoints the fantasies of omnipotence and omniscience. With these developments, however, it becomes easier to distinguish destructive

impulses and fantasies from their real effects, so anxiety about the fate of good objects which are also hated, is lessened.

In Bion's account of the rise of mature thought, the container-contained model remains although it is supposed to be taken as simply a model, not a concrete apparatus. One of the first steps in knowing is giving a name, to "bind" the unknown phenomena by taking note of their constant conjunction. Then the fragments may be contained by the name and acquire or be given meaning. Similarly, a theory is a name for an observed constant conjunction of phenomena whose meaning is then sought. Knowing is thus in part a boundary-drawing activity.

Metaphor

Although Bion does not discuss it specifically, the idea of metaphor would seem to be a useful area for exemplifying his work on thinking and knowing.

In Kleinian accounts of cognitive development, early symbols are based on bodily experiences. Prior to symbolism, the child makes an identification between the world and his or her own body (chapter three). Formation of new symbols is both aggressively and libidinally motivated; one wishes to control and possess, to find the loved self in the external world, and to avoid by increasing abstraction objects which are equated with other objects of dread.

There is some similarity here to Piaget's concept of assimilation to the self (1929) or pure egocentric assimilation (1951). Among his many contributions, Piaget suggests that early confusion between thought and reality is due to "a constant assimilation of external processes to schemas arising from internal experience" (1929, p. 132). Piaget takes the interactionist position that both organizing structures and schemas

of the child as well as the environmental stimuli contribute to the formation of perceptions, memory traces and thoughts; this is similar to the Kleinian position.

But Piaget also sees this assimilation, early in life, as implying some type of lack of boundary, at least in any perception by the subject, between the subject and the external world.

Reality is perpetually being "assimilated" by the motor schemas of the organism, without it being possible for consciousness to take part in this assimilation Assimilation is therefore . . . the expression of the complete continuity which binds the organism to its biological environment. It is prior to any distinction between the external world and the ego (1930, p. 131).

Play is pure egocentric assimilation, where reality is assimilated to the child, rather than the situation where the child must adapt to external reality in the work of survival. Symbolic play furthermore allows the child to assimilate in some form aspects of external data which he or she would not otherwise be able to comprehend in any way.

Searles (1962) also believes that the use of metaphor raises an issue about the boundaries of the self. One needs to have firm ego boundaries in order to use metaphor without confusing it with literal equivalences. He surmises, however, that to use a metaphor, one must have had a previous somatic experience of it. This seems to refer to a subjectively felt oneness with the world, a lack of self boundaries implying an unimpeded flow from "inside" to "outside" in infancy which makes later comparisons across boundaries, such as in metaphor, possible.

Bion uses the idea of the body as a model in his stages in cognitive development. Early forms of thoughts are more directly parallel to physical processes; in some sense Bion seems to be saying that early thought is a type of fantasy process performed on fantasy objects. Both

the process and the objects resemble physical experiences and entities. Projective identification, as the process through which one moves from primitive to more advanced thought forms, also may be represented by physical models although in the abstract it is supposed to be merely the relationship between the container and the contained. Bion also refers to the digestive and respiratory models of thinking as being like myths about thinking.

These metaphorical uses seem related to the container-contained model and the problem of knowledge. Knowing the other raises a boundary issue which is different from the problem of knowing oneself. In attempting to know the other, the most primitive approach is through egocentric assimilation, identification between the self and the other, and fantasies of incorporation. All of these imply boundary fluidity, aimed at making the other, the stranger, part of oneself so that the problem is reduced to self-integration and self-knowledge. Here the container is the familiar self. Metaphor is a more advanced development which acknowledges separation and difference, and similarity, at the same time. This requires the ability to contain these contradictory elements, and must be an accomplishment of the depressive position. In the most abstract form of thought, the attempt is made to divorce words of concrete and metaphorical implications as in scientific theories. The theory contains, for further use and thought, a set of events and phenomena taken to be related, in the way that a name contains the constant conjunction of phenomena it represents. However, this most abstract form of container-contained example also has the most possibility for confusion between the container and contained. In concrete examples, the boundary between the two is concrete and reassuringly present. When the boundary is only conceptual,

it is more easily lost. Tactile models, especially, reassure through their sensual aspects.

The Relationship Between the Person and Reality

In all of this we encounter the issue of a relationship to reality in the external world. Klein begins with the assumption that fantasy is a relation to reality, so that all the fantasy processes, projective and introjective identifications and the like, have some basis in reality, however slight. With development, fantasy internal objects are transformed into and replaced by more accurate, symbolic, abstract representations of reality, but this is always reality as experienced by the person (cf. Kernberg, 1966, p. 243), and as influenced by the already present internal world and expectations.

Thus far I have emphasized the incorporative fantasies about relating to reality: taking it in, digesting it, introjecting good objects, identifying with aspects of external reality. But projective mechanisms are also part of a relation to reality. For Klein, the gradual development of a self and of a sense of reality takes place through alternations of projective and introjective mechanisms. Identification between some aspect of external reality and some aspect of the self also functions as a contact with, an attempt to know, reality (Jaques, 1955). Freud (1911a) viewed some projections as part of a normal attitude toward the external world. Nunberg (1957) points to the positive aspects of projection, and also transference, in this light. Although projection can imply an unrealistic loosening of boundaries, it aids the finding, in the outside world, of objects felt to be lost. It proceeds from a need to assimilate actual experiences, even if it also expresses a need to make the perceptions conform to repressed unconscious ideas. Searles (1962) even feels that

some experience of felt loss of boundaries between the self and outer reality, through introjection and projection which imply boundary opening, or even through (psychotic) fusion experiences, is necessary for adequate development. Such an experience eases the loss entailed by relinquishing fantasies of omnipotence and omniscience and rejecting introjective and projective fantasies that one can really be another person. The ability to experience external reality, as such, depends on the knowledge that it is not so threateningly different from oneself, after all.

Searles (1951) believes that the parents of psychotics are unable to respond appropriately to them, which must include inappropriate responses to early projections and introjections. What Bion proposes in this area is the function of the mother as a receptacle for projective identification: the child must feel his or her projections of inchoate experiences and impulses can be tolerated and transformed into usable, meaningful experience (chapter four) in order to continue with normal development. If the mother, as the representative of the external world, is unresponsive, rejecting, or unreassuring, impetus to relate to external reality will be lost and the relationship will be distorted. I think Bion is implying that if the mother cannot confirm the kernel of trust in the projective identification, the basis for discrimination of true and false will be altered. Instead, there will be the beginning of a distorted relationship to reality and the use of reality testing. If the first "container" fails to contain, the use of other containers (dreams, metaphors, words, theories) would seem to be affected.

Ego Boundary Maintenance

Bion's comment on the difficulty of conducting a theoretical discussion without the intrusion of concrete images and connotations, which may not be appropriate, can be applied to the present work: thus far, self boundaries and the crossing of them through projective and introjective processes have been discussed as if these were actual physical entities and events. Schafer (1968a) contends that ego boundaries are mental representations which can be maintained with varying degrees of conviction by the individual. The person is not a mere passive recipient of events and their effects; he or she actively creates, admits and denies experience. That this view would be accepted by Bion is supported by his emphasis on individual responsibility for what happens in a group, despite the pervasiveness of special phenomena labelled group process.

Schafer's (1968a) discussion of the "suspension of reflective self-representations" provides a model for the events which have been presented here as posing problems in ego or self boundary maintenance. Rice (1969) has suggested that interaction with another system or with the environment entails the threat of boundary dissolution, since boundaries must be permeated to allow transactions to occur. Setting up conventions for these crossings is the accompanying problem which creates anxiety about boundary dissolution. From the individual's point of view, there is a need to establish conventions and create a new map of reality to determine perception, what is to be acknowledged as real, or distinguished as internal or external after the transaction. Furthermore, boundary alteration implies some temporary boundary loss between representations for reconstruction in accord with the new situation, as in the creation of a representation of the self which includes the attribute "group member."

In Schafer's definition, reflective self-representations are contents of subjective experience which are the mental representations of oneself as thinker of one's thoughts. These express the ego system's relatively objective view of aspects of id, ego and superego processes and their interrelations, one step removed from representations of action. Normally, they are immediately available to consciousness.

Schafer claims that regression in the service of the ego, and in general, all changes which are labeled loss of self, or blurring of ego boundaries, are changes in these mental representations. Those necessary to represent action are preserved, while reflective awareness of the self existing apart from action disappears. In psychosis, the normal reversibility of such suspension is limited or slowed, or sometimes entirely absent. Whenever the reflective self-representations disappear, the sense of reality becomes less clear, temporarily, or more permanently as in psychoses. Self-conscious experience of a situation becomes unavailable and is replaced by a sense of "presences" developed from perceptions and mental representations of actions and fantasies about imagined internal objects, which accompany some early object representations. I would suggest that as the perception of reality is impaired, assessment of danger is affected: an imagined, anticipated threat may be felt to be present. When the objective view of the self as existing in time is absent, anxious expectation may shade into inappropriate fear of present danger, as in the regressive perception of a group as a dangerous maternal entity.

One of Schafer's points is the absence of a sense of the self as acting during these periods of suspension (1968a, 1968b, 1976), although such action continues. This suspension is an activity like that involved in repression. Such a valuable ego function as self consciousness can

never be allowed to just fade away; it must be selectively suppressed to allow certain other activities, for example dreaming or psychosis.

Symbiosis and Ambivalence

Returning to the example of projection as a characteristic of group participation, it is striking to consider Schafer's comments:

. . . It is possible to sort out at least two more aspects of this mechanism [of projection], namely, its entailing both an alteration of representations and a shift of emphasis. These two are often, perhaps always, inter-related. Concerning the former, projection clearly involves a change in the self and object representations. In particular, it requires a shift of content across the borders that have developed between the two types of representation. How might this shift be accomplished? Something must change at the borders. The boundary lines must become temporarily blurred or obliterated. This change implies a significant degree of dedifferentiation of the self and object, a regressive merging of the two. As Jacobson (1964) has shown, this merging itself constitutes a kind of pregenital union with mixed elements of annihilation and libidinal gratification. . . The value [of Schafer's conception] lies in enlarging the account of projecting to include the regressive, destructive, and satisfying symbiosis and the sense of loss or riddance of personal impulse and substance, and with these of archaic internal objects (1968b, pp. 55-56).

Schafer's interpretation of the meanings of projection illuminates the general issues the individual joining a group faces. Projective processes are one way of attempting to make contact with the reality of the group, an attempt which fails because of its affective and cognitive complexity, and the ingrained conflict between one's individual and group natures. Bion comes close to implying that the group contact problem is immediately approached as if it were like the situation where the infant tries to make contact with, and develop a conception of, the mother as a whole object. The initial failure in this attempt with the group results in regression, and an increased tendency to react to the

group as if it were the preoedipal mother. Projective tendencies do not cease with the regression; rather, they become more primitive and compelling as the marginally differentiable members also seem available as targets for projective identification of parts of the self, along with perception of the group as a whole as a mother figure on an unconscious level.

The boundary crossings in projection take on a number of meanings. Projection represents one attempt to know the other, albeit in a way distorted by the self, and by narcissistic needs to identify or replace others with aspects of the self. But as Schafer has pointed out, the dissolution of boundaries necessary for self and object representations to change carries implications of a "regressive, destructive, and satisfying symbiosis."

In preceding chapters, I have described the ambivalence and conflicts on many levels which are provoked by group membership. Aside from the realistic difficulties in relating to a complex entity like a group, which is additionally experienced as a single object, a number of conscious and unconscious expectations are raided by previous experiences with social and family groups, and with the maternal group of part objects in one's internal world. The individual may anticipate social support or rejection; a threat to personal distinctiveness and an attractive evasion of individual responsibility. Basic assumption participation seems effortless and comfortable, yet it, too, is associated with frighteningly primitive images and impulses and eventual frustration.

On an unconscious level, the use of the group and its members for projective processes and splitting may contribute to a gratifying sense of having rid oneself of bad impulses, thoughts and internal objects.

At the same time, however, this results in a sense of loss and threat to personal wholeness, as well as the feeling of being persecuted by the externalized objects and impulses. Projection of one's positive capabilities or good internal objects, in order to protect them or be relieved of responsibility for them, results in similar feelings of being robbed of one's identity.

The tendency to perceive a group in terms of longed for states contributes to its desirability to the member, and hence to group cohesion and supportiveness, but interferes with development of a realistic relation to the group which will make task activity possible. Perception of the group in terms of negative aspects of the part object representations, and recognition of the incomplete nature of interpersonal experience of our loved objects in childhood, lead to feeling of anxiety, and defenses which also interfere with realistic membership in the current group.

On the most primitive level, the group is perceived as a pre-oedipal mother image available in split representations; a good object with which one may blissfully be fused, and a bad object which may destructively annihilate and devour. These are the possibilities of good or bad symbiosis which Schafer outlines as part of the meaning of boundary dissolution in the example of projection. Regression to early preoedipal mother relations results in a alternation of these good and bad images, but if the member remains with the group despite the terrifying image of a bad symbiosis, it is because he or she is actually experiencing the conflict and ambivalence of a later position. As noted in a preceding chapter (chapter seven), pure paranoid-schizoid anxiety about persecution would lead one to leave the group. Anxiety of the depressive position, where it is recognized that the same object provides both positive and

negative experiences, is the characteristic of wishing to join a group while fearing the experience. The ambivalence about the object, in this case the group as the object, makes the relationship and contact painful.

Boundary Anxiety in the Group

We can see from the discussions in this chapter that boundary issues of several types will be raised in joining a group. Regression and primitive processes in groups (projective and introjective mechanisms, primitive identification and idealization, splitting, fantasies of omnipotence, omniscience, and of symbiosis) all have implications for boundaries around the self and aspects of the self. In particular, reactivation under stress of early self-object-affect units related to symbiotic or need-satisfying relationships with the mother tend to recreate early attempts to discriminate the self from the mother. As P. Kernberg (1976) has suggested, part object relationships imply fragmented self images also, so that the task of being a whole self in the group is made more difficult. This seems most problematic in groups which offer minimal support for customary neurotic and normal defenses.

The necessity of altering some self representations to become a member of the group, coupled with the fantasies about the group-as-a-whole, and what it means to join, results in some boundary fluidity. In systems terms, the boundary must be opened to allow crossing.

Reconsideration of self and ego boundaries involves redetermining the "locations" of introjections and projections and other aspects of the personality. This requires attention to fantasies about internal objects and the nature of one's representations of the world; to do this accurately requires sufficient frustration tolerance to decide on the basis of

experience, rather than wish, what is inside and what is outside. To act on that decision is a further challenge.

From a larger perspective, knowing the other is a boundary problem as one part of the relationship between the person and the external world. Joining a group is a boundary contact between two systems, the individual and the group. In general terms, the individual must decide whether or not to include himself or herself in his or her image of the group, and whether or not to include the group in some way in his or her image of self.

Knowing the other in the group, or knowing the group as a whole object, is difficult because of the tendencies to project and perceive regressively. If thinking regresses to concrete fantasies, how can accurate knowledge be possible? Knowing the other as a whole object, with both positive and negative aspects, is a tenuous achievement under the best of circumstances; in the group, pressures for splitting and part object relatedness are present. These derive not only from the regressive reaction to the complexity of group contact, but from the fact that the group is, literally, an entity comprised of definable separate entities. As Gould (1975) has described this, we experience "ten people and a group in the room." This is one reason why groups often break up into pairs: it is easier to try to relate to one whole object at a time.

Knowing an individual member in the group means recognizing again that a perfectly good or bad object has not been found--that one's fantasies are not identical to reality. Additionally, the other member's role in the group, and degree and kind of susceptibility to basic assumption participation, will affect one's perception of him or her. Others in the group are also subjected to the temptation to act out the roles assigned

them in one's fantasies of projective identification, as one attempts to actualize these fantasies.

Such acting out by numbers of members occurs in response to others' reactivations of early self-object-affect units. Kernberg (1975) has described the pull toward such re-enactments by the therapist in the treatment of borderline persons, for example. In the group, the pervasiveness of this process contributes to the felt loss of responsibility and personal boundaries. This again makes thinking about and knowing the other difficult, if the use of projective mechanisms is making what the self contains seem uncertain.

The process of seeing the group as a whole object passes through stages. One concrete fantasy is of the group as a container, which raises questions about what it can contain. This requires decisions by members about what to "put in" the group-container. The group may also be used as a name or theory to collect certain experiences in a reassuring and useful way. Sophisticated group work may be impeded by conflicts and fantasies about the spatial implications of these levels of approach to the group. For example, one may not wish to feel contained by the group, or to invest (in a concrete fantasy) a part of oneself in the group. Fantasies about boundary alterations may include ideas of being devoured by the group if one moves within its boundaries, or of returning to a blissful union with the mother. One may also have fantasies about what it means to take part in and "contain" a group experience, or to contain others' projections in the group.

In line with suggestions about systems and boundaries made by Rice, and utilizing the work of Kernberg, Slater, Gibbard and Hartman, I would propose that the self boundary problem posed by group membership is

a major source of anxiety about joining a group. The transient self boundary fluidity required by this enterprise, along with its associated fantasies, raises the possibility of a psychotic boundary loss.

Jacobson (1964) contrasts normal fusion experiences of ecstasy with psychotic fusion. Such experiences of fusion, which result from loss of boundaries between self and object representations, can have libidinal or aggressive sources. Normal experiences of ecstasy arise from a fantasy of libidinal union between self and objects, and hence provide positive feelings of satisfaction and richness. These experiences also allow for immediate re-establishment of self and object representation boundaries. Psychotic fusion, Jacobson believes, is caused by a regressive response to aggressive impulses, implies destruction of the self and world, with no indication that boundaries will be rebuilt, and leads to confusion of self and object representations.

It may be assumed that both sets of impulses, libidinal and aggressive, are evoked with the images of good and bad symbiosis in the challenge to ego boundaries found in group contact; libidinal strivings for reunion and belonging, and aggressive wishes aimed at the mother and the potentially frustrating group. If this is so, the danger of psychosis would be dependent on the strength of the regression and the aggressive drives evoked. The tendency to imagine a good symbiosis adds to this danger because it does involve fusion of self and object representational boundaries in the mind, however momentary, in the presence of hostile impulses.

Yet the state where boundary loss is feared is necessary to the creation of new boundaries, as noted above. Such a state, or even a state of fusion, often has been suggested to be a healthy basis for further

growth, for example, the controlled regression during the earliest, least structured period of a psychoanalysis (cf. Winnicott, 1955). The image of fusion, composed of fantasies of incorporation and dissolution of boundaries between self and object representations, can also form a basis for knowledge of the other. This knowledge is necessary as a basis for interaction.

Scheidlinger's use (1952a, 1968) of the concept of regression in the service of the ego in groups is valuable in this context. Despite fears of the bad symbiosis and destruction by the hostile impulses which are re-evoked by the image of the contents of the mother's body, the individual member usually does not become psychotic in the group.

Bion's assumption that the regression provoked by group contact involves loss of "individual distinctiveness . . . indistinguishable from depersonalization" must be considered here. Scheidlinger (1960) has interpreted Bion as saying that all individuals experience psychotic depersonalization in the group, a statement with which he disagrees.

It seems likely that some of the discussion on this point is due to confusion about the Kleinian concept of psychotic anxiety. According to Kleinian accounts of early development, the child goes through periods of intense anxiety associated with the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. The first anxiety is of annihilation by persecutory figures experienced as either external or internal, internalized or projected. Depressive anxiety is experienced when one learns that the hated object is also the loved object, and fears the effect of one's hatred on the desired object. It also accompanies integration of good and bad aspects of the self image, when omnipotent, idealized hopes and fantasies are first disappointed. These anxieties seem to be called psychotic because

of the Kleinian contention that each of us has a psychotic core, i.e., that a stage of confusion about reality, self boundaries, and thinking processes, like that of psychosis, is a normal developmental phase. Thus, to claim that a group member experiences psychotic anxieties has less of an implication of special pathology than it might in another context.

Scheidlinger's contention that the group formative regression is a regression in the service of the ego would allow the possibilities of boundary fluidity which have been described above. Scheidlinger himself has described some giving over of self to the group (chapter six), which might be a plausible interpretation of Bion's comment. In Schafer's terms, reflective awareness of the self as acting in time and reality is suspended in this regression.

I would suggest, however, that although individuals rarely become psychotic in the group, with complete lapses in reality testing, sense of identity and ability to think, each of these areas of functioning is threatened in the group. Regression to the point of fears of psychotic boundary loss probably occurs, with the unconscious fantasies of symbiosis and other states of weak differentiation (cf. Slater, 1966). Anxiety arises with the simultaneous perception of possibilities for uncontrolled regression. Some of the characteristics of basic assumption life resemble psychotic manifestations in thinking and sense of self and reality; what differs is the ability of the individual to recover outside of the group environment, and to utilize or even create structures which will support defenses against psychotic anxieties, for example, structured groups.

Bion's use of the concept of "psychotic anxiety" is borrowed from Klein, but his application of it to describe the process individuals experience in groups seems also to be accounted for in terms of concern

about boundary fluidity, since total loss of self boundaries would imply psychosis. Individual distress in groups could thus be viewed as a function of the vicissitudes of individual boundary maintenance, as Slater, Gibbard and Hartman have suggested. Initial anxiety about the possibility of self boundary destruction, loss of criteria for reality, and psychosis, arises because changes in ego boundaries must occur when an individual faces the problem of joining a group, and the changes, stress, and regressive pull of the situation evoke the image of total dissolution. The individual's flexibility in making and surviving boundary changes despite ambivalence about the group, while maintaining some stability, determines the actual degree of the threat of boundary loss and deindividuation. In most group members this threat is never entirely realized, but its prospect is terrifying, and gives rise to transient but relatively bizarre processes in normal or neurotic individuals.

The difficulty for individuals in groups seems to be in taking the action necessary to counteract the regression and suspension of reflective self representations, and create the new boundaries, once the group contact has been made and the feelings of ambivalence and psychotic anxiety begin.

Our definition of being is in many ways derived from action, not location (e.g., Schafer, 1976). Before the infant has a clear idea of a separate self, it "knows" only its actions and their effects (Piaget, 1929, 1951). Later, the development of the concept of causality derives, at least in part, from the person's experience of himself as a purposive cause (for a discussion of this, see deCharms, 1968). For Freud (1915), there is a link between reality testing and voluntary action; the mental image of a need-satisfaction which is not recreated by activity in reality

is a hallucination. Yet in the group situation, acting to define and defend boundaries becomes a formidable task. One characteristic of Bion's basic assumption group is its inability to act because it lacks contact with reality. A related characteristic of members is a preference for ideas of incorporating or "having" pieces of knowledge without the activity of learning about reality, based on fantasies of omnipotence or fusion with an omnipotent object, to avoid the frustrations of acting in reality. This inability or unwillingness to act is the crucial issue. We need to actively support various representations in order to draw new boundaries, new rules to make sense of reality. Yet such rules are a precondition for dealing with reality at all; we cannot make use of what information our senses provide without a theory of what is admissible to experience. Contact with an unstructured group raises fundamental questions--how will we act, on what basis will we act, what information will we utilize, what part of the self will we invest in the group, what kind of person will we be for the group. We also wonder what the group contains, or can contain. Until shared experience accumulates, members can communicate only on the basis of old self concepts, expectations, introjections and projections--the internal world which becomes so salient at this time. Action to decide these issues demands risk taking, commitment and responsibility. With any action, the possibility of taking others instead is closed, and images of omnipotence are correspondingly less sustainable. As Slater (1966) puts it, the nature of action is to demonstrate that one is separate from the environment and has limited control over it. Ambivalence makes the choice of a single act even more difficult.

This presentation may be summarized as follows. Boundary maintenance problems confront the individual, as a system, when interchanges with

a group are initiated. These problems are heightened in contact with situations with few conventions, such as unstructured groups or psychoanalytic sessions. Transient ego boundary loss is necessitated by attempts to recreate boundaries around self and object representations, which will be appropriate to the new aspects of reality presented by a group. This reactivates primitive fears and desires relating to early periods of boundary weakness or inability to distinguish the self from an engulfing or pleasantly merging other. Several levels of ambivalence are evoked by these images, aggravating the boundary control issue. The temporary loss of boundaries implies psychosis to the individual, and psychotic processes develop, notably ideas of omnipotence (in part derived from fusion with a powerful other), possession of pieces of knowledge, seriously distorting projections, and intolerance of reality and of learning from experience. While visions of a good symbiosis and union with the group may be helpful as preludes to admitting the reality of other members and the group situation, and to becoming willing to learn about them, the individual invests images of fusion with an attraction which is hard to overcome. A further hindrance to actively drawing boundaries is that it is hard to act without them.

Hartmand and Gibbard (1974a) have suggested that what occurs over a period of group membership is an alternation between symbiosis and individuation. The person attempts to avoid having alienation accompany individuation, and strives to prevent symbiosis from becoming a destructive engulfment of the self with loss of identity. They suggest that symbiotic fantasies represent a compromise between these two painful extremes, merging and total solitude. Because the group is not really the pre-oedipal mother, adult modes of coping remain though they may be transiently

unavailable.

This fact, that adult functioning remains more available to the group member than to the psychotic, is reassuring in the face of Kleinian descriptions of psychotic anxiety, malevolent part objects, and lost pieces of the self.

Yet it is still appropriate to ask why group regression, and group process effects, such as contagion and multiple projections, seem so disturbing. Extremely primitive reactions may be evoked in the beginning of a psychoanalysis, and the analyst may be used to recreate relationships with a preoedipal mother image, yet there are those who argue that the group reaction is even more primitive, more chaotic, even in normal or neurotic persons. The difference seems to lie in the fact of number: the analyst and the group may each be seen as a collection of part objects, but the group is also a number of real persons, each of whom could be related to in this way. The analyst and the group each present single entities to which one attempts to relate, but the group is in addition a collection of whole objects. A unitary conception of a person or a group is an achievement, a construction which seems more difficult in the case of the group than for a single person. It is this difficulty, perhaps, which tends to re-evoke memories of the previously most difficult construction, that of the mother as a whole object.

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