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AN INTEGRATION OF SYSTEMS COMMUNICATION AND OBJECT RELATIONS GROUP THEORIES

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AN INTEGRATION OF SYSTEMS COMMUNICATION AND OBJECT RELATIONS GROUP THEORIES

by

GABRIELLA SIMONE RAPPAPORT

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to indicate a direction for the future of group theory. It is based on an awareness of the strength of the foundations of the current theories as well as on an awareness of their limitations. Of the many theories of group behavior that have been written, it is my opinion that the two such theories which are the most fully articulated and which deal with areas of group behavior which are complementary to each other are systems communication and object relations group theories. Both object relations group theory and systems communication group theory are also the closest approximations the mental health field has thus far produced of actual theories of group behavior. Object relations group theory is perhaps the most clearly demarcated and self-contained theory of group behavior in the literature. This may be in part due to the fact that, since its formal presentation in the work of W. Bion (1968), almost no theorists other than object relations theorists have continued with his work. By definition, then, one could say that object relations theory has been written thus far by followers of Bion.

Systems communications group theory, on the other hand, does not have such a straightforward history. L. von Bertalanffy created general systems theory (1950a, 1950b) for the purpose of creating a theory at a level of abstraction such that theorists in various fields could communicate with one another about similarities in the phenomena they observed and could create theories to describe and/or explain them. A

number of theorists in various fields responded creatively to general systems theory and began to tailor it to fit their needs. Among such theorists were G. Bateson (anthropologist), D. Jackson and J. Reusch (psychiatrists), P. Watzlawick, and R. Birdwhistell. Understandably, from such diverse fields a rich elaboration of general systems theory was developed. More refinements were made when family therapists began to expand and attempted to apply it to the theory and practice of family therapy. Such authors include most notably (aside from those mentioned above) J. Haley (originally a student of popular film), J. Weakland (engineer turned anthropologist), and J. Helmick Beavin. Over the years there has been some protest about who and what actually make up the area known as systems communication theory. Many family therapists have attached themselves to the "systems school" and, by virtue of their use of this label while publishing their observations, have become associated with it. Not all of these theorists and practitioners have a conceptual link to systems communication theory. Furthermore, the distinction between theory and application often has been blurred to such an extent that they are assumed to be synonomous.

In this dissertation, the following will form my basic working assumptions. First, I assume that Bion's classic work, Experiences in Groups (1968), is the cornerstone of the object relations group theory literature. Second, I assume that the works of the diverse theorists who adhered to the basic tenets of general systems theory in their writings about various types of groups have enough in common, and enough that is different from other theorists not so associated, to be called a school of thought. Third, I assume that families are a specialized subset of the category, "groups." As such, the works of family therapy

theorists are available for study when their works are consistent with systems communications theory. Fourth, I assume that theory of groups is significantly different phenomenologically from both the treatment of groups and the theory of the treatment of groups. In terms of the latter, treatment theory will be used primarily for exemplification. My fifth and final assumption is that an integration of object relations and systems communication group theories is an essential part of understanding group behavior as fully as it can today be understood.

The discussion of these issues is not meant to be etiological but descriptive. I do not wish to enter the dispute of causation, but rather to attempt as accurately as possible to describe the nature of ongoing group interactions. This distinction must be a bit more fully elaborated in order to clarify the direction which this dissertation has taken. It is not a developmental model I wish to construct, but rather a cross-sectional analysis. Specifically, what I am trying to indicate is that patterns of communication in and of themselves have psychological meanings which amplify, distort, or clarify intrapsychic events. Patterns of communication among members of groups are not merely to be understood as data about the intrapsychic life of each individual, but more importantly as data about the interactional shaping of a system which affects this internal life as it is shaped by it. For example, just as individuals have tendencies to take on certain roles in groups, groups exhibit communicational systems which pull for certain roles. In other words, such communicational systems make available the context within which similar roles take on different meanings in groups.

I believe that all groups, regardless of their task, interact with all levels of their environment at the same time the members of such

groups interact with each other. The environment of the group includes systems in increasing complexity from the group itself to the institution and larger society of which it is a part. Systems communication theory analyzes the individual-group boundary from an interactional viewpoint that specifically exludes intrapsychic phenomena, while object relations group theorists analyze it with particular emphasis on intrapsychic dynamics to the virtual, if not literal, exclusion of interactional events. Because both types of events occur simultaneously, it behooves the group theorist to integrate these two perspectives so as to be able to account for group dynamics within the group's systemic context.

Both theories presented in this dissertation have set forth ideas about group behavior which correspond well with each other. One such similarity will be described in order to show the rationale for using these two theories.

As clinical implications came to be drawn from systems communication theory, it became clear that some of the irrational elements of interpersonal behavior could be traced back to a specific communicational context. It was noted that certain types of behavior that were bizarre in one context became adaptive or functional elements within another context or system. In a sense, within that system the communication becomes intelligible and purposive. Upon inspecting this system, it becomes clear that the members of the system collaborate in the production of the overall communicational patterns which the clinician observes. Therefore, one unique and significant contribution of systems theory to psychology is that, in a documentable way, the interaction of various system units could be described and some useful predictions

made. A significant but often overlooked corollary of this idea is that the results of collaborative interactions are amenable to study. This is of particular importance to the study of groups. In other words, not just the elements of collaboration but a higher (or different) order of phenomena; the individuals are not just observed doing various constructive and destructive things. A system made up of individuals is observed in purposive behavior. A group is categorized as an entity capable of behavior, which is not caused by any one person, but rather, is influenced by, as it influences, each individual.

Without this latter point, no study of group behavior would be possible, and it is on this point that object relations group theory and systems group theory claim their most far-reaching similarity. Object relations group theory sets forth an in-depth analysis of the intrapsychic ramifications of both rational and irrational group level communication which is collaboratively created by members of the group. The patterns of such behaviors are defined in terms of their intrapsychic corollaries which originate in early infantile development. The external manifestations of such patterns are judged to become observable only when the group is physically met, although such patterns also occur and exist both before and after such meetings since each individual has an internal object representation of the group. Therefore, although there are some differences, the basic idea that memebers collaborate (rationally and irrationally) to create group patterns of behavior can be found in object relations as well as systems group theories.

Each theory also has limitations; I feel that these limitations can be made smaller by creating an integration of the two theories. There

are systematic flaws in the systems communication literature which often the authors themselves noted. These gaps in the model they proposed had to do with the individual's experience of being in a particular system. Their orientation was largely teleological, focusing on the purposiveness of communication systems. This view of man has always appealed to me, and still does. However, this orientation in the systems literature has led theorists away from questions having to do with the "why" of communication patterns and toward questions having to do with the "how" of systemic patterns. They have, I feel, accomplished this task admirably. But the literature left me with two related questions, large and intriguing. First, what is the intrapsychic nature of the experience of individuals who participate in a system? Second, what can be said about why a system of communication evolves in one way rather than another, without detracting from the recognition of the purposiveness of that system or subscribing to a purely deterministic view of this evolution?

There are also systematic flaws in the theoretical model proposed by the founders of the Tavistock conferences and the object relations literature upon which much of their thinking was based. This model of group life is generally deterministic in nature. The literature presents a very well-crafted and cohesive description of why events which occur in groups take place in the manner they do. The gap in the model has to do with not describing as clearly the mechanisms by which such events occur in the group.

This dissertation is my way of answering these questions by achieving an integration of the two models of group life mentioned above. The two models together present a more complete picture of groups than either alone.

Both the systems and object relations group theories have much to recommend them in the way of presenting a satisfyingly complete theoretical account of the phenomena they describe. Further, they are so mutually complementary in so many important ways, that a variety of interested people have made at least passing note of the usefulness and potential inherent in a theoretical integration. Most previous attempts at implementing such integration show evidence of a limited understanding of and sensitivity for one or the other, or both sets of, theories. Other attempts are marred by attempting to formulate an application of such an integration without setting forth the theoretical recalibrations first. I shall attempt to avoid both types of error by setting forth in some detail the major elements of both theories in a critical review of the literature. Then an integration will be achieved by noting as accurately as possible the points at which the two theories describe different aspects of the same phenomena in group behavior and synthesizing these points, thereby achieving some extension of each in integrative terms with the other. In sum, this constitutes the rationale and content of this dissertation.

The organization for this dissertation is as follows. The first chapter critically reviews a carefully selected set of fundamental principles of systems communication theory as it is based on general systems theory. Only those elements have been included which seem to be useful in terms of an integration with object relations theory. The second chapter critically reviews similarly carefully selected fundamentals of object relations theory as set forth by M. Klein (1975a, 1975b) and object relations group theory as set forth by W. Bion (1968). Again, only relevant parts of both are included. Included in

this chapter is a brief critical review of the works of theorists who have previously mentioned or attempted integration of systems and object relation theories. The third chapter will address the integration that the current author proposes. Chapter four will illustrate and expand this synthesis using the play, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Albee, 1962). The final chapter will note areas for future exploration.

Chapter I

This chapter will consist of a review of the systems communication theory as it applies to groups. Definitions will be provided for the two concepts: communication and system. Then descriptions will be given of different kinds of communication patterns and kinds of mechanisms which affect such patterns. These latter concepts will be used frequently in subsequent chapters.

Communication

In order for any notions about communication systems to be useful, defining the term "communication" is essential. Any behavior which has "message value" (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967, p. 48) in an interactional setting is defined as communication. They posit that since there is no opposite for behavior, no such thing as "nonbehavior" (1967, p. 48), there is no possibility in an interactional situation to not communicate. Any internal dialogue is expressly stated as being outside the parameters of this definition of communication.

Ruesch and Bateson (1968) state that, "As of today, we believe that communication is the only scientific model which enables us to explain physical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural aspects of events within one system" (p. 5). They also note (1968) that communication of all varieties takes place within what they define as the "social matrix" in which ". . . our behavior . . . is . . . both a response to other people's reactions and a stimulus for their behavior" (p. 9). They emphasize the circular nature of communication by saying ". . . that a

system of interaction is established in which cause and effect can no longer be isolated . . ." (1968, p. 8).

There are two parts to communication: the "report" and "command" aspects. The former contains the information and the latter contains the relational aspect of the communication. The command or relational aspect of communication consists of an instruction about how the information is to be taken; it is a metacommunication or a communication about a communication. For instance, Watzlawick et al. (1967) give the following as an example for an ambiguous metacommunication, although the content is clearly written on a notice in a restaurant: "Customers who think our waiters are rude should see the manager" (p. 53).

Watzlawick et al. posit that it is important to distinguish between what they call digital and analogic communication. Analogic communication includes all manner of nonverbal communication including the paraverbal, contextual meanings, and any other nonverbal cues present. Digital communication, on the other hand, includes only the language itself. They note the abstract nature of digital communication and add that "words are arbitrary signs that are manipulated according to the logical syntax of language" (1967, p. 61). Of the two, "analogic communication . . . has its roots in far more archaic periods of evolution and is, therefore, of much more general validity than the relatively recent, and far more abstract, digital mode of verbal communication" (1967, p. 62). They further assert it is almost exclusively responsible for the definition of the nature of relationships. Following this logic, the report or content element of a communication is conveyed digitally while the command or relational aspect is conveyed analogically. They note a parallel between analogic

and digital communications and primary and secondary processes described by Freud (1965, pp. 73-74). In analogic computers, in analogic communication, as in primary intrapsychic processes, there is no possibility to express a simple negative, ". . . no qualifiers to indicate which of two discrepant meanings is implied, nor any indicators that would permit a distinction between past, present, or future" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 65). In contrast, digital communication possesses all of these within a system of complex logic.

Communication includes all behavior, it is a circular process, and it can be conceptually subdivided into two parts. Nonverbal or paraverbal elements regulate communications of relationships between or among people, and the linguistic elements regulate the communication of abstracts.

Systems

It would be impossible to understand communications theory without first setting forth the parameters within which such study occurs--systems. Hall and Fagen (1956) define a system as ". . . a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes" (p. 18). Objects in this context refer to individuals as an inextricable part of an irreducible communicational interaction. In other words, an object is not an individual, but a unit composed of two or more individuals engaged in communication. The attributes of these objects is operationalized within the framework of interpersonal communicative behaviors with the express exclusion of intrapsychic phenomena. Relationships are defined as those interactions within the system which are of sufficient interest to be studied, the "trivial" relationships thus not being included. "Interactional systems, then,

shall be two or more communicants in the process of, or at the level of, defining the nature of their relationship" (Watzlawick et al., p. 121).

There is a difficulty with this definition of a system. Every effort has been made to define a system without the complexities of including in it any aspect of intrapsychic life. A system is defined as a communicational process; however, the fact that this process originates from communicants, from people who have an internal life, is expressly excluded from the systems model. I do not challenge the definition in terms of what it says, but rather, in terms of what it does not say. I feel it would enhance systems theory to include in the model of a communicational system, the concept of intrapsychic phenomena.

Hall and Fagen (1956) make a distinction between two fundamentally different types of systems: the open and the closed system. The distinction they make is as follows: ". . . organic systems are open, meaning they exchange materials, energies, or information with their environments. A system is closed if there is no import or export of energies in any of its forms such as information, heat, physical materials, etc., and therefore no change of components, an example being a chemical reaction taking place in a sealed insulated container" (1956, p. 23). The importance of this distinction cannot be overestimated, especially because it ". . . freed the sciences concerned with life-phenomena from the shackles of a theoretical model based essentially on classical physics and chemistry: a model of exclusively closed systems" (1956, p. 122). Ruesch and Bateson (1968) noted that, "While, in the past, theories of personality were concerned with one single individual, modern psychiatrists have come to the realization that such theories are

of little use, because it is necessary to see the individual in the context of a social situation" (p. 3). While this can be seen as an overstatement, the point is clarified by Birdwhistell (1959):

> . . . an individual does not communicate; he engages in or becomes part of communication. He may move, or make noises . . . but he does not communicate. In a parallel fashion, he may see, he may hear, smell, taste, or feel--but he does not communicate. In other words, he does not originate communication; he participates in it. Communication as a system, then, is not to be understood on a simple model of action and reaction, however complexly stated. As a system, it is to be comprehended on the transactional level. (p. 104)

In order to understand relationships within a systems framework, one presupposes that such relationships by definition constitute an open system in which information is exchanged among or between members of the system as well as with the environment. The communication between the system and the environment takes place across the boundary of the system, however, it is almost never clear precisely where this boundary is and how it was formed. According to Hall and Fagen (1956):

> In a sense, a system together with its environment makes up the universe of all things of interest in a given context. Subdivision of this universe into two sets, system and environment, can be done in many ways which are in fact quite arbitrary. . . .
> It is clear from the definition of system and environment that any given system can be further subdivided into subsystems. Objects belonging to one subsystem may well be considered as part of the environment of another subsystem. (p. 20)

Within this framework it is clear that, for instance, the marital dyad is part of a family which affects it and is affected by it; that the family in turn is part of an extended family in a similar fashion; that the extended family is part of one or more cultures; and so on. Systemic relationships can be seen as existing at many levels of increasing complexity simultaneously.

A system, then, is a communicational process between or among two or more people. Such systems are always open since they always participate in exchanges (of resources, energy, information, and so forth) with the environment. This environment can never be identified with exactness, but rather, is a somewhat arbitrarily marked area around the system.

Communication Patterns

In order to describe how different types of events take place within a communication system, I must first describe the events themselves and by what method these events are located. The method I am referring to is the punctuation of communication. The types of communicational events, or patterns, I shall describe are: schismogenesis (complementary and symmetrical communication) and paradoxical communication which has pragmatic consequences in human behavior (including injunctions and predictions).

"The nature of a relationship is contingent upon the punctuation of the communicational sequences between the communicants" (Watzlawich et al., 1967, p. 59). Punctuating communication refers to the necessarily arbitrary beginning and ending one uses as reference points in an interaction. For practical convenience, only a portion of ongoing communications can at any given time be studied, therefore, such a study superimposes an artificial beginning and end on the communication which can distort the study.

In a study of communication systems, certain patterns of communication emerge. One of these patterns is called schismogenesis, defined by Bateson (1935) as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behavior resulting from cumulative interactions between

individuals" (p. 179). They abbreviate the two types of schismogenesis by calling one complementary and the other symmetrical. The former is based on a relationship in which one individual occupies a "one-up" position in an interaction and the other occupies the "one-down" position. The nature of complementary communication is to maximize the differences between the two parties (whether those parties are individuals, groups, or countries), and this relationship may reflect the idiosyncracies of the participants or the cultural context of the interaction. A symmetrical interaction, on the other hand, is one in which the parties involved minimize the differences between them. Perhaps a graphic illustration of these two processes will clarify the distinction between them. Complementary communication can be seen as resulting in a line, with each increment in length in one direction resulting in an increment in the other direction; symmetrical communication can be seen as a ray with only one direction so that each increment in a given direction results in an increment in the same direction. The potential pathology of complementary communication is called rigidity while the pathology which can develop in symmetrical communication is called escalation; in both, the basic process simply increasingly repeats itself. According to Watzlawick et al. (1967), "All communicational interchanges are either symmetrical or complementary, depending on whether they are based on equality or difference" (p. 70).

Within the general rubric of system communication patterns, Watzlawick et al. (1967, pp. 187-229) brilliantly examine a most informative albeit complex aspect of human communication called paradoxical communication. In their exploration of paradox, they define it as ". . . a contradiction that follows correct deduction from consistent

premises" (1967, p. 188). They further subdivide and define three types of paradoxical communication which they call "logico-mathematical paradoxes," "paradoxical definitions," and "pragmatic paradoxes" (1967, pp. 189-195). The latter has the most relevance to the psychologist. Pragmatic paradoxes have behavioral consequences, while the former two are abstract constructs more appropriate for study by mathematicians or philosophers.

They distinguish between two types of pragmatic paradox: the paradoxical injunction and the paradoxical prediction. Within a given system of communication, an order or injunction is given which, in order to be obeyed, must be disobeyed and which, in order to be disobeyed, must be obeyed. An example is given (1967) in which a parent, whose marriage is patently unhappy, says about the son, "After all, it's a simple matter. All we want in the world is for George to have as happy a marriage as we have" (p. 210). Watzlawick et al. (1967) comment that, "Defined in these terms, the only conclusion is that a marriage is happy when it is unhappy and, by implication, unhappy when happy" (p. 210). It may be added that the son is being asked to do what is impossible in the terms defined.

Bateson, Jackson, Haley and Weakland (1956) discussed the double bind concept which later became part of the description of paradoxical injunctions in the work of Watzlawick et al. (1967). In this latter context, Watzlawick et al. noted that the first element of a double bind is that "Two or more persons are involved in an intense relationship that has a high degree of physical and/or psychological survival value for one, several, or all of them" (p. 212). They note that these relationships might be found in a marriage, family, political group, or in

the psychotherapy situation as well as in other contexts. The second necessary element of a double bind is that the message "(a) . . . asserts something, (b) it asserts something about its own assertion, and (c) these two assertions are mutually exclusive" (1967, p. 212). A person is thereby defined by those characteristics he/she does not possess or is defined as someone who does not have the characteristics he/she does in fact possess. The third necessary element of a double bind according to Watzlawick et al. (1967) is that ". . . the recipient of the message is prevented from stepping outside the frame set by this message, either by metacommunicating (commenting) about it or by withdrawing. Therefore, even though the message is logically meaningless, it is a pragmatic reality: he cannot <u>not</u> react to it, but neither can he react to it appropriately (nonparadoxically), for the message itself is paradoxical" (pp. 212-213). They add that there is usually also a prohibition against noting the discrepancies involved with the result of any such challenge even being attempted, being that this person is defined, then, as crazy or a "bad" person. One must, of course, bear in mind what is not overtly mentioned here, and that is that such paradoxical communication takes place within a system which has made a variety of investments in the development and maintenance of the communication pattern. It is not true that one party set a paradoxical trap which another party inevitably steps into, but rather that a variety of events antedate and post date the communication under study, and that the communicants and the larger system of which they are a part jointly created the paradox. Specifically, for example, the often studied double-binding mother who seems endlessly to set paradoxical traps for her schizophrenic child, who obligingly tumbles into them endlessly,

actually lives and breathes in a larger family in which the marital dyad has long ceased to communicate about anything but their "crazy" offspring.

It is well to note that a systemic understanding of the double bind is extremely useful in studying group behavior. Various group level irrationalities can be viewed from a systems perspective. For example, racist or ethnocentric myths in the societal system can be seen as a massive double bind in which, it is important to realize, all groups concerned are bound. The "good" group is being described as having attributes they do not have, and as not having those attributes which in fact they do possess. The "bad" group likewise is being described as having what it does not possess, and as not having what it in fact does possess. As long as the concerned groups remain within the paradoxical frame of reference, the existence of all these groups will continually be negated (not rejected but negated), thus raising anxiety levels and thereby encouraging still more distortion of reality.

The second type of pragmatic paradox is the paradoxical prediction. The necessary foundation for a paradoxical prediction is implicit trust. If within a trusting relationship one partner promises to do something untrustworthy, one has established the necessary foundation for this type of paradox. It is based on the power expectations have to affect behavior. After years have been spent setting up a system of communication, the people involved in it come to believe they know what to expect in a variety of situations and behave in accordance with that belief, thereby affecting the behavior of other people in the system. This reliability comes to be associated with trustworthiness. A paradox evolves out of this situation when a prediction is made which says that

the trustworthiness will be maintained by breaking it because that is what is expected. For instance, a therapist may say to a patient that when the patient learns to trust that the therapist will not violate confidentiality, the patient will confide secrets in therapy, and this will enhance treatment. When the patient confides in treatment that he/she just committed a felony crime, the therapist tells the police, thus aspiring to prove his/her trustworthiness by destroying it since, not to destroy it (by not telling the police) would be unethical and, therefore, untrustworthy.

The patterns of communication in an open system which have been described are complementary and symmetrical communication. An additional set of patterns discussed are types of paradoxical communication. How these patterns are maintained will be the next topic of this literature review.

Mechanisms Which Affect Patterns

In his statements on what he labelled general systems theory, von Bertalanffy (1956) notes that organisms in general and human beings in particular are members of open systems. The second law of thermodynamics for closed systems can be seen as being related to open systems as well. Since entropy, which is a physicist's measure of a kind of disorder, is based on the probability of certain events being irreversible, in open systems that probability would be similar, thus also creating entropy. However, the former he called positive entropy and the latter imports, in addition, negative entropy which ". . . may even develop towards states of increased order and organization" (1956, p. 4). This import process is described as feedback. Because closed systems (e.g. chemicals interacting in isolation) are by definition not

engaged in any exchanges with the environment, such an import is not possible. Open systems, on the other hand, do import and export energy in exchanges with an environment. The feedback process he describes is peculiar to open systems. Closed systems progress toward ever-increasing states of dissipation until ultimately achieving a final state of dissipation called equilibrium. Open systems, on the other hand, progress towards what is called a steady state. A steady state is not a final point of equilibrium, but rather a process of an evolutionary nature. This steady state ". . . is characterized by the principle of equifinality . . ." (von Bertalanffy, 1962, p. 7), which simply means that the same product can be attained by different beginnings and that different products can be achieved by similar beginnings. That ". . . is, in contrast to equilibrium states in closed systems which are determined by initial conditions, the open system may attain a time-dependent state independent of initial conditions and determined only by the system parameters" (von Bertalanffy, 1962, p. 7). In the study of groups, this means that groups, as open systems, can transcend their initial components, patterns, and beliefs.

The imported negative entropy in an open system can be exemplified quite well by what is called negative feedback or a negative feedback loop. The process of feedback itself is given by von Bertalanffy (1956, p. 5) as follows. By using a neuron firing as an analogy, he noted that a stimulus is received by a receptor which, by receiving it, also is giving or sending a message to a control apparatus which in turn sends a message to an effector which sends along a response to some part of the adjacent environment. This completion response in turn is itself a message back to the receptor to ready itself for the next stimulus.

This is an example of feedback. Watzlawick et al. (1967) describe feedback as ". . . part of a system's output [which] is reintroduced into the system as information about the output" (p. 31). They further distinguish between positive and negative feedback loops. When this circular information flow leads to a loss of stability or to a change away from the norm in the system, it is called a positive feedback loop. On the other hand, when this circular information flow leads to a regaining of stability or the decreasing of system deviation from a set norm, it is called negative feedback.

The above conceptualizations on feedback loops provide psychologists with a vehicle that can break through the limitations inherent in a strictly deterministic view of human behavior. It allows psychologists to view the circular nature of human interaction. Causes and effects have circular rather than linear relationships since the effect has an impact on the cause and the cause on the effect.

By defining the details of some beginning notions of the applicability of general systems theory to the study of human communication, several important points have been made. The first is that human beings must participate in communication, no living person can <u>not</u> participate in communication. Second, the nature of human communication is such that when two or more people engage in it, their communication takes on the form of a system with all attendant properties. These systems are defined as open systems with characteristics distinguishable from inorganic closed systems. Third, the boundary between the system of communication and its environmental context is what could perhaps be best described as permeable. Fourth, the relationships possible within the system and between the system and environment have been classed as

either complementary or symmetrical and further described in terms of pragmatic paradoxes.

One of the advantages of a systems perspective on group behavior is that this view is as clear as it is precise in describing the fairly simple mechanisms by which groups build and maintain their communication systems. The major limitation of this parsimonious description of groups is that the individual is accounted for only in terms of his/her part in a systemic process. The fact that an individual alone is also an open system is not fully enough addressed.

Chapter II

This chapter will be devoted to reviewing the literature of the object relations group theorists. The most notable of these is Bion who outlined his observations on group behavior in a series of articles which were published in a book called, Experiences in Groups (1968). I shall introduce his ideas by discussing his thoughts on group responsibility in order to focus clearly on the level of phenomena Bion was studying. He did not focus solely on the individual nor solely on the content of conversations which occur in groups; he tried to study an area which included both. I shall then proceed to present the ties between Bion's work and the ideas of M. Klein (1975a, 1975b) as they relate to the intrapsychic experiences of the individual in a group. I shall then present a brief critique of Klein's model. Following this is Bion's conceptualization of group processes (work and basic assumption group processes). The last section of this chapter will consist of a brief review of the works of theorists who have attempted to integrate systems and some form of psychoanalytic group theories.

Responsibility in Groups

By exploring the nature of responsibility in groups, I hope to define area of phenomena Bion studied and call that area, group processes. In this way the boundaries of group life can be explored, including the internal boundaries between the individual and the group.

The importance of group membership in an individual's life Bion (1968) elaborates as follows: "The point that I wish to make is that

the group is essential to the fulfilment [sic] of a man's mental life . . ." (p. 53). It may have been this essential belief that lead him to focus his attention on group processes as a legitimate activity for those six weeks he spent at the Training Wing of an Army psychiatric facility. At that time, he wrote about the innovations he made in treatment noting that one of his central concerns was the implementation of discipline. He was working hard to establish a method which would encourage the group as a whole to take responsibility for its own behavior, which is one part of what discipline is. He adds (1968) that in the leader-follower relationship in a group, "Nobody is very happy about insisting on collective responsibility . . . [but, he assumes] nevertheless, that unless a group actively disavows its leader it is, in fact, following him" (p. 58). It is essentially, from this basic belief, that he built what he felt was a group level extention of Kleinian theory. After all, if a group can be shown to have exhibited behaviors and be held accountable for these behaviors, it is a necessary correlate that a group exists and as such is not merely an aggregate of individuals. The panoramic theoretical possibilities which opened up as a result of this deceptively simple premise must have been staggering to Bion, and certainly now, over 30 years later, the initial full harvest has not yet been reaped. So, Bion's first, and in some ways most difficult to accept postulate, based on his belief in the existence of group level phenomena, is that individuals, to a large extent, behave on behalf of the group-as-a-whole. One of the most important prerequisites for studying a group's responsibility for its behavior is being able to describe that behavior accurately. This task is the stated purpose of this dissertation. In the last chapter, systems theorists' description

of group behavior was given; in this chapter, the object relations description will be given. Two of the clearest sets of writings I have read which map out the parameters of any study of group behavior will now be cited.

Singer, Astrachan, Gould, and Klein (1979), while discussing various types of group intervention approaches, identify three "psychological levels or systems" (p. 24) at which group interactions can be observed. First, they define group processes as that level of events at which covert processes lead members to act on behalf of the group to respond to the dilemmas felt to be facing the group. Second, they identify interpersonal processes as the influences on the group behavior of the history of transactions members have with one another. The third level includes the intrapsychic processes. At this psychological level are included the history of each member's own ". . . anxieties, conflicts, fantasies, defenses, and compensations . . ." (p. 25). Singer et al. also state that, "Each is a system conceptually different from, but related to, the others. Since behaviour is multidetermined, any event occurring within a group can be understood as the product of processes occurring on all of these levels simultaneously" (pp. 24-25). Gosling (1979) also notes the "three realms of reality for a member of a group (p. 81) saying that:

> First, he inhabits his private world of thoughts and dreams, uncommunicated and largely incommunicable. Second, he inhabits a world that is shared by the others, conceived of in terms of time and space about which a good deal of agreement can be gained without much difficulty. This is the ordinary world of common sense that is objectively perceived. And third, he inhabits a world of shared creations of the mind, fantasies, attitudes, values, assumptions,and misgivings, that have little that is conclusive to show for themselves objectively, but by virtue of being 'held in common' have a great influence of the life of the group members and are in that sense extremely real. (p. 81)

The above conceptualizations of group behavior--subdivided into three levels or realms of phenomena--are cogent models which capture the essence of object relations group theory. They define the area under study and give the perspective from which it is observed. This perspective is closely tied with the experiences of the individual intrapsychically and interpersonally. An examination of each model with its three different origination points for group behavior, leads to the conclusion that an assignment of responsibility for such behavior is incomplete unless it includes all three levels.

Bion and Klein

Bion (1968) elaborates in elegant style the functioning of the various group processes and can account for each individual's capacity to join in these processes by referring to M. Klein's object relations theory. He states that this capacity has its roots in early infantile development of object relations and the primative defenses that are developed at that time. In Bion's theory, the necessary setting for such regressive pulls exist merely in the symbolic meaning of the presence of a group. In Freudian terms (Freud, 1957), the presence of a group and a commonly perceived leader is sufficient cause for such regressive pulls. Certain irrational processes can be described within such an intrapsychic framework by relating them to early infantile anxieties, and the defenses such anxieties tend to mobilize. In fact, according to the object relations group theorists, this is the most significant occurrence in a group. It is from this rich cauldron of intrapsychic dynamics that group processes emerge. Therefore, in order to understand groups, one must concurrently appreciate the importance of and understand the vicissitudes of intrapsychic life. Each individual

member of a group is surrounded by other people who, in terms of object relations theory, represent certain things and a history of experiences to him/her. (Such theorists also postulate that the entire group is perceived as an object which is very similar in nature to the first part object, the nursing breast.) According to object relations theory, this is the basic pattern of all human social relationships. These relationships, when distilled, are perceived as falling somewhere on a continuum between being libidinally gratifying to being libidinally frustrating. Since object relations group theorists have used Melanie Klein's elaboration of Freud's object relations ideas to explore group dynamics, I shall outline Klein's developmental theory as it applies to the etiology of group processes.

Klein postulates two stages of early infantile development: the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions. She states (1975b) that the infant's nascent self is unable to distinguish between itself and things not belonging to the infant. To make the point clear, she defined (1975b, p. 249) the construct she labelled "self" to include the entirety of the person (psysically and psychologically); a construct different from, although it included, the ego. In the infant's inability to distinguish between that which does and that which does not belong to it, the infant's mother ". . . is not then felt to be a separate individual but an aspect of the self" (1975b, p. 303).

In a group setting, adults can be observed to behave as if this early infantile inability to differentiate between self and other was still operative. To understand how Bion and others have arrived at this, an examination of the meaning of the word "group" is in order. Bion (1968) notes:

> I hope to show that in his 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 . . . 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 regression. (p. 141)

The infant, during the paranoid-schizoid position as described by M. Klein (1975b), imagines the existence of a host of unrelated and unpredictable part objects. In point of fact, merely one part object exists (the breast) which is part of one whole object (the mother). Bion notes that the anxiety aroused by the enormous task of dealing with a group is so acute that only the defense which protected one from one's worst anxiety suffices. This anxiety is similar to the life-and-death anxiety the infant faces in dealing with the breast. The adult's regression becomes visible through the belief in a single group and a further belief that this group has certain ". . . characteristics with which . . . [it has in point of fact been] . . . endowed by the individual" (Bion, 1968, p. 142). The third aspect of this regression occurs when the individual experiences depersonalization, a certain feeling ". . . of unreality or strangeness concerning either the environment or the self or both . . ." (A Psychiatric Glossary, 1975, p. 42).

These three phenomena can obscure the existence of an aggregate of individuals making it look like a group, a single entity, to an observer and a member in the group. Following this logic allows Bion to conclude that the observable existence of an aggregate that behaves as a group indicates that they are collectively in the same state of regression to infantile defenses. And if they begin to approach awareness of their

individual responsibility then the aggregate panics. Among other things, therefore, a belief in the existence of a group as a single-entity, results in psychological and moral anonymity. It is the group which is seen as being exclusively responsible for behavior, the individual does not engage in a realistic assessment of his/her own participation in bringing about group events (Rioch, 1975, p. 170).

Why would sane adults "panic" when they are in a group and feel that they are about to be confronted with the reality of their own distinctive identity? It is useful to clarify this aspect of Bion's observations in terms of Kleinian theory. Klein has set forth some descriptions of the infant's earliest experiences of omnipotence and helplessness; the anxieties which these experiences arouse; and the defenses which are mobilized to fend off such anxieties. Her theoretical position is as follows.

During the paranoid-schizoid position (which lasts for the first 3-4 months of infancy, she notes that frustrations which the infant encounters while feeding are felt unconsciously as coming from hostile forces (1975b, p. 248). In terms of the former experience, she notes that the infant feels persecuted because the infant expects and fears retaliation for his/her own destructive impluses and ". . . resentment about frustration, [the] hate stirred up by it, the incapacity to be reconciled, and envy of the all-powerful object, the mother . . ." (1975b, p. 249). The infant's early oral-sadistic desires are reinforced during periods of frustration, causing the infant to feel that he/she has ". . . taken in the nipple and the breast <u>in bits</u>" (1975b, p. 5). The infant has thus, among other things, projected his/her destructive impulses onto the bad breast, thus establishing an external

representation of the death instinct (1975b, p. 31) which threatens to totally fragment the infant in similar fashion to the introjected fragmented and destroyed part object--the bad breast. Mitigating against the enormous anxiety this arouses in the infant are the gratifications experienced under the dominance of the sucking libido at the good breast which is felt to be whole and complete (1975b, p. 4). The reason that these experiences mitigate against anxiety is partly because the stage is now set for the infant to engage in defensive splitting. Although splitting is never fully effective, since, Klein felt, from the beginning of life the ego tends toward integrating and synthesizing different aspects of objects, it does allow the infant to preserve some sense of being able to master and overcome the severe anxiety around the fragmented bad breast. Splitting simply means that the infant keeps the good and bad breasts apart as though they were not both different aspects of the same object. In this way the good breast can be protected and preserved internally and externally. To further defend against the tremendous anxiety of becoming fragmented, the infant engages in idealization of the good breast (1975b, p. 49). Since such idealization springs from the power of instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification, the purpose or goal of the idealization is to create the image of an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast, an absolutely ideal breast indeed (1975b, p. 7). The introjection of the good breast allows the infant to experience relative security and is instrumental in building the ego since it represents wholeness and unity with which to allay the fears invoked by fragmentation of the bad breast.

Aside from defensive splitting, there is one other major defense developed during the paranoid-schizoid position which is of great value to the group theorist. Klein notes (1975b, p. 8) the infant's desire to take in all that is good from the mother by mouth and conversely to expel into the mother all manner of dangerous excrements. Along with the expelled excrements are hated and split-off parts of the ego which are thereby also projected into the mother. The purpose of this activity is twofold: first to control the object and second to injure it. The mother, however, is not experienced by the infant as containing bad parts of the infant's self but rather as being the infant's bad self. The hatred the infant feels is now not felt to be directed at his or her own bad parts, but at the mother. This is, of course, the basis of the ". . . prototype of an aggressive object relation . . ." (1975b, p. 8) which Klein calls projective indentification. Through projective identification, the infant experiences the mother as a persecutor since the threatening objects are now located there and furthermore, the infant can direct his/her aggression at the mother rather than at his or her self, since the mother now houses the infant's bad objects. Klein further notes that the infant's ego is weakened by this process because the aggression syphoned off to locate bad objects in the mother are no longer available to be used in productive ways by the infant.

However, the infant does not identify with the mother via projection only in terms of aggression. Projective identification also occurs when the infant projects his/her good objects into the mother and identifies with what the infant then perceives as the mother's goodness and love. Klein cautions that if carried to an extreme, this process also causes a weakening of the ego, inasmuch as the mother becomes an

ego-ideal while internal goodness is felt to be lost, the consequences of which are twofold. First, there is an "over-strong dependence" (1975b, p. 9) on those other people, including the mother, as they represent the internal good objects. Second, there is a fear that the capacity to love has been lost, since the loved object is perceived ". . . to be loved predominantly as a representative of the self" (1975b, p. 9).

The individual can experience the group as a single entity which sometimes gratifies and which sometimes frustrates. This is the first and simplest prerequisite for the emergence of primitive anxieties. The group translation of paranoid-schizoid anxieties centers around hostility felt toward a sometimes frustrating group which contains certain ill-defined hostile forces. Associated with this hostility is the panic and fear of the group's retribution for such aggressive impulses and acts. Gratification in the group can be similarly experienced as eminating from certain equally ill-defined benevolent sources within the group. The individual in the group can engage in projective identification or splitting, or it can occur as a group-as-a-whole phenomenon. Object relations group theorists such as Bion dealt with the latter whole group processes.

Object relations group theorists have also found it useful to put forth group theory based on Klein's description of the depressive position. A synopsis of this developmental position follows.

In the second quater of the first year, the introjection of a whole object (the mother) has occurred which means marked steps have been made in the direction of integration. A dilemma which accompanies this increased capacity for perceiving and dealing with whole objects in all

their complexity is a heightened fear of loss and sense of guilt. Both are due to the feeling that since good and bad are closer together and are in fact both parts of the same object, the hostility which is directed against the bad is also felt to be directed against the good.

These activities are the heralders of the opening of the depressive position, according to Klein (1975b, p. 14). Depressive feelings are thus defined by Klein to be marked by intense feelings of loss and guilt both of which are dealt with via ". . . the drive to make reparation . . ." (1975b, p. 14) to repair the loss and undo the injury inflicted upon the good object.

The depressive feelings themselves serve to integrate the ego, according to Klein, since they allow the ego to perceive the external world more clearly, to better understand psychic reality, and to synthesize more of the inner and outer situations. The reparative responses to this depressive anxiety are important, Klein felt, since they allow for the creation of more satisfying object relations. So, over the first several years of life, as the depressive and persecutory anxieties are worked through, there is a decrease in idealization as well as a decrease in the terror associatied with early object relations. Although synthesis occurs during development, it was Klein's firm conviction that full synthesis is never completed. Throughout life, ambivalence is felt with varying degrees of anxiety and is dealt with via various defenses. The defenses which are mobilized from the depressive period on include paranoid schizoid position defenses which are used to defend against a different type of anxiety and are characteristically less severe in usage due to the ego's increased capacity to tolerate ambivalence and to perceive psychic reality.

From the depressive period onward, the fear of endangering the good object during an assault on the bad object, increases greed. This increase, according to Kleinian logic, is felt to be virtually infinite, that greed for the good, spurred as it is by a fear of losing it forever, is insatiable. However, the good is now with some degree of increasing success seen to be inseparable from the bad; therefore, insatiable and destructive greed for the good on the one hand and anticipated assaults on the bad on the other hand, lead to a two-pronged threat to the good object. The ego reponds to this potentially desperate situation by decreasing or inhibiting instinctual impulses associated with either greed (e.g. eating) or aggression. The ego also increases its identification with the injured, or destroyed whole object. This increased identification with the injured, potentially injured, or destroyed whole object, in turn yields decreased aggression and an increased "drive to make reparation" (1975b, p. 73).

Due to the difference between persecutory anxiety and depressive anxiety, the nature of the defenses against them changes. For instance, Klein notes that splitting during and after the depressive position largely is used to reassuringly separate the ". . . uninjured live object . . . [from the] injured and endangered one (perhaps dying or dead)" (1975b, p. 74). So, perhaps one can extrapolate from this that what has really changed due to development is the perception of the nature of good and bad. During the paranoid-schizoid position, the gratifying part object is defensively split from the frustrating part object, whereas during the depressive position the whole object is split into an uninjured aspect and an injured-dying aspect with the clear implication being that the former is good and the latter is bad. In

light of this one can see why Klein referred to the affective tone of this position being similar in quality to mourning (1975b, p. 74) complete with reparation attempts meant to revive the dying or repair the injured loved object. In a sense, this is the basis for what non-psychologists would refer to as integrity; for conceivably the first time responsibility is accepted for behavior, both real and imagined and its real or potential consequences. Due to the manic nature of defenses during this very early stage of life, the response to this acceptance of responsibility may be viewed as harsh or severe; however, over time a more modulated response is accomplished. Nevertheless, the reparative activity draws, according to Klein, from libidinal energy and from this developmental point forward all such subliminatory activity has a reparative aspect. Further, she notes that reparation becomes ". . . the great means by which depression is kept at bay and diminshed" (1975b, p. 75).

The above described conceptualizations constitute the essential parts of Kleinian theory that are used in this dissertation. The paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions as well as the defenses she called splitting and projective indentification will all be used in discussing group theory. Before presenting the work of Bion and his followers, I would like to briefly set forth what I feel are the major limitations of Kleinian theory because some of these weaknesses are carried over into object relations group theory.

Critique of Klein

Neither Kleinian nor object relations group theory has been clearly extended to include the further clarification of the boundary between external "realities" and what we perceive through intrapsychic

distortions as "realities." There is little or no presumed absolute reality.

In the pages Klein devotes to setting forth her explicit ideas about what constitutes mental health (1975b, p. 269), she sets forth what is a basic motif in all of her writings. She sees life's interactions as being a linear set of events in which one's ". . . inner life always influences the attitudes towards external reality and in turn is influenced by the adjustment to the world of reality . . ." (1975b, p. 269). At first glance, this may not appear to be linear logic. However, her virtually unchanging emphasis on adjustment or adaptation to one's perception of reality firmly establishes her linear philosophy and psychology of life. Because the individual is the author of his/her perceptions in this scheme, he/she is the originator of the interpersonal field. This field causes things to happen to the individual to which he/she adjusts by altering the internal representation of this field. Such an internal change causes a change in the perception of the field and so on. Although this latter chain of events is depicted in a circular and at least theoretically unpunctuated way, the artificiality of the beginning point establishes a powerful linear distortion. The linear distortion can be illuminated by noting that it is precisely these very early beginning object relations that in fact serve to form and structure the individual's ego itself. This is the ego that increasingly is expected, among other things, to operationalize defense mechanisms when its perception indicates that a threat exists in the interpersonal and/or internal field. This means that those very early distorted perceptions (or, perhaps more accurately stated, introjections and subsequent identification with these introjected objects) help to

form the ego and thus serve as a developmental or etiological basis for all future distortions. In discussing the origins of transference in her paper on this topic, she states (1975b), "The picture of the parents in the patient's mind has in varying degrees undergone distortion through the infantile processes of projection and idealization, and has often retained much of its phantastic nature. Altogether, in the young infant's mind every external experience is interwoven with his phantasies and on the other hand every phantasy contains elements of actual experience . . ." (p. 54). It is as if the Genesis chapter of each individual created the world in which he/she lives. This is further substantiated by Klein when she notes that:

> . . . the picture of the external world--represented first by the mother, and particularly by her breast, and based on actual good and bad experiences in relation to her--is coloured by internal factors. By introjection this picture of the external world affects the internal one. However, it is not only that the infant's feelings about the external world are coloured by his projection, but the mother's actual relation to her child is in indirect and subtle ways, influenced by the infant's response to her. (1975b, p. 312)

The linear distortion here is subtle and camophlaged by Klein's repeated statements to the contrary, that the interaction between internal and external, between reality and fantasy is the central issue throughout life. The reality of her various presentations is that she is off-center interactionally. She stays closer to the individual, the internal experience, the world of fantasy than she does to the interpersonal field, to external realities. This means she emphasizes what the individual has done to see the world as he/she does, to behave as if it were the way he/she sees it, and to even make it into what he/she sees. This is not to say that all of the above are not, at times, true, but rather to suggest that within this description, the events of psychological life have been punctuated with a bias.

What must be borne in mind at this point is that, carry-over distortions in object relations group theory can be traced back to these Kleinian roots. Perhaps it is appropriate at this point to indicate that although Bion is one of the few theorists in psychology to view group level phenomena as valid objects of study, he and his followers do lapse into linear thinking on occasion when interpreting the data. For instance, Bion and his followers attempt to use Klein's notions about individual behavior and development to explain and pinpoint the source of group level manifestations. In the individual-group relationship the cards are stacked so that the individual attains a position of more significance than the group and at times the group is even viewed as behaving as an individual behaves. The idea that the individual is the source or model of group level events establishes an unavoidable linearity of thinking which maintains that "a" causes "b" rather than understanding the circular nature of the interaction. It also distorts one's appreciation of the different and interacting systemic levels involved; although the individual and the group interact, this does not mean that they can be described as interchangeable dynamically. What is additionally systematically left out of such linear descriptions is that the group itself is always functioning within another larger system. So, although Bion does make statements that demonstrate his understanding of interactional phenomena, he and his followers do not consistently adhere to this position. In terms of the primacy of individual dynamics in understanding group level events, it is a most curious observation to make that this is an enactment of group-level splitting of the individual from the group in order to isolate the individual as the sole cause for group irrationalities. One is left to

wonder what is so anxiety-provoking about seeing leaders and followers or individuals and fellow members as collaborative authors in group events that this reality must be distorted in sophisticated and ambivalent ways whose end result is linear in nature. Why are group theorists reluctant to let go of this pervasive defense group function? Perhaps there is something so treacherous about being held accountable as an individual for the behaviors of one's group members--including its leader(s)--that even in theory it cannot be unambivalently considered. As one becomes aware, through the media and other communications, of the larger and larger group to which one belongs, maintaining a balanced view of leader-follower interactions becomes at best a good scare and at worst an immobilizing terror. It is far more expedient and emotionally safer to distort the new-found group level phenomena so that they seem to merely be modelled after a more familiar individual development set of infantile fears. Fears for one's own life as an infant (assuming Klein is right) is a different terror against which to defend than fears for the death of a planet collectively destroyed by oneself and one's human group. It is too facile to say that the latter (the death of a planet) is merely a symbol for the former (one's own death). More will be said about the varied ramifications of this argument later, for now, suffice it to say that Bion's wholehearted and in some sense visionary grasp of the circularity of relationships is one that remains only occasionally understood and acted upon (even by him).

Work Group Processes

Within this Kleinian framework, Bion elaborates what dynamics among aggregates of individuals are required to earn them the name work group processes. Work group processes are those which are rooted in

individuals co-operating with one another for the accomplishment of a common task. This means that individuals voluntarily help each other which Bion feels indicates a degree of sophistication and training. Bion draws a parallel between the reality testing and rational elements of the ego and the task-oriented and co-operative functions in work group processes. Bion (1968) establishes the four following necessary conditions for the existence of work group processes, ". . . the development of thought designed for translation into action; the theory . . . on which it is based; the belief in environmental change as in itself sufficient for . . . [change] without any corresponding change in the individuals; and finally a demonstration of the kind of fact that is believed to be 'real'" (p. 145).

Bion maintains that groups, overtly, are all met to do something; therefore, it is essential that thought be translatable into action, otherwise, nothing could be done about accomplishing the group's task. This can be termed the group's primary task which is ". . . the task that it must perform if it is to survive" (Hutton, 1962a&b, & Rice, 1958). Bion's second condition refers to the theory upon which the task-oriented actions are based. Bion describes the processes underlying such a task-oriented theory as basic assumptions (which will be described in the next section). When an assumption is applied to the accomplishment of a task, it is part of a work group process. The third condition for work group function is the belief that change can be brought about (e.g. task accomplishment) without change occurring in the individual members of the group. Anyone who has ever sat on a committee or at an organizational meeting can verify that things get accomplished because of the human being's capacity for hypocrisy at worst or ability

to co-operate effectively at best. This latter co-operation occurs in accomplishing a task which a member believes in just as well as one he/she does not believe in. If individuals did not believe that change could be accomplished unless each individual in a given group changed correspondingly, task groups would doubtfully ever have formed and once having formed would have soon been discarded altogether as quite hopelessly ineffective. The fourth condition Bion mentions is the demonstration of the accomplishment or task the group believes itself to have achieved.

Bion contrasts work group processes with basic assumption processes. The later exist before a group physically meets, and remain operative after it ceases to meet, and even when the group ceases to exist (e.g. when it dissolves or its members die). Basic assumption processes are not constrained by reality. Work group processes, on the other hand, tend to have specific and observable beginnings and endings. Although at first it seems odd that work is not likely to occur unless the group is physically meeting, this limited likelihood could be based on the fact that the capacity for co-operation is a necessary element of work group processes and is a secondary process response which presupposes a judicious and individually distinctive sense of responsibility. Although such a sense of responsibility is difficult to maintain in the presence of others, Bion indicates that it is virtually impossible to maintain when the physically present group has been replaced totally by one's internal representation of the group (before and after meetings). In other words, work group processes have a higher probability of occurring when the group is actually meeting because each member's sense of responsibility toward the task can be

defined through co-operative reality testing. This cannot be done as easily when the group is not meeting because then members cannot as easily co-operate in defining each member's responsibility (or job) relative to the primary task. Each member's internal representation of the group, its task, and their own responsibilites relative to each, would be subject to distortions which would go unchecked. Without other members present to shape one's behavior, one could tend to do too much, too little, or the wrong kind of work relative to the task. Therefore, in this latter situation, one is not surprised to find basic assumption processes since neither co-operation nor task accomplishment occur when these assumptions are ascendent.

Bion carefully discusses what he feels to be the interface between work group processes and basic assumption processes. He often reiterates that the processes themselves are not mutually exclusive although their results may or may not be quite different. He notes (1968), for instance, that ". . . the specialized work group [has] . . . as its function the manipulation of the basic assumption to prevent its obstruction of the work group" (p. 135). One of the functions of work group processes is to defend the activities of task accomplishment from an onslaught of diverting basic assumption irrationality. By organizing itself, the group engaged in work group processes both defends itself from the anxieties associated with basic assumption irrationality and moves itself toward task accomplishment.

It is important to note that such theorists as Jaques (1974) would hold that there are differences among the uses organizational structures

can be put to. He notes: "The specific hypothesis I shall consider is that one of the primary cohesive elements binding individuals into institutionalized human association is that of defense against psychotic anxiety. In this sense individuals may be thought of as externalizing those impulses and internal objects that would otherwise give rise to psychotic anxiety and pooling them in the life of the social institutions in which they associate" (p. 278). He goes on to state that, institutions serve other purposes and he elaborated the various primitive defense mechanisms individuals employed to cope with the institutions they were a part of. Without embarking on a full-scale analysis of Jaques's contribution, suffice it to say that the most cogent element of it in terms of Bion's notions of work group organization is that, according to Jaques, it is essentially a defensive behavior.

Basic assumptions provide the energy channel necessary for task accomplishment, it seems, and perhaps one can even go so far as to say that in work group processes, basic assumptions are the channels through which libidinal cathexes for the task flow. This is an elaboration of Miller and Rice's (1975) notion of sentience that a group may have for the task. They note (1975, p. 66) that the individual in a group may experience satisfaction or deprivation in relation to the task itself.

In sum, a group engaged in accomplishing a primary task by using a basic assumption to achieve that end, is engaging in work group processes. This group will have attained some level of organization which is created to advance the work while simultaneously defending against anxieties which threaten to disrupt this work. As group members participate in work, they may or may not derive satisfaction in their relationship with the primary task.

Basic Assumption Processes: general principles

In this section, I shall present Bion's thoughts on basic assumption processes, including the general characteristics of all basic assumptions. There are three different kinds of assumptions the group makes about the situation or context within which it finds itself and upon which it chooses to behave. The group at these times behaves as if its assumption about the reality of this context is true. An elaboration of the three will be made after the general principles of basic assumption life have been put forward.

What must be kept in mind is that, as outlined above, basic assumption and work group processes are conceptualized as being two aspects of one set of phenomena--group dynamics. The intricacies of the relationship between the two processes is complex and rich although it would seem that in some ways, only the more general aspects have been depicted. It seems that when work group processes are ascendant, basic assumption life is visible but under the organizational and co-operative influence of the former. When basic assumptions are ascendent, however, it is probable but not inevitable that work group processes have ceased to function altogether. Basic assumption life, then, can be seen as the ever-present foundational bedrock upon which group life is built.

One of the characteristics which is basic to all three types of basic assumption processes, is the relationship to time. Bion notes (1968, p. 159) that when basic assumptions hold sway over the group, members do not correctly carry out appropriate activities related to the passage of time. Bion further says (1968) that such activities are ". . . imperfectly comprehended and tend to arouse feelings of persecution" (p. 158). Klein (1975a, p. 188) was the first to make the

connection between the inability to understand something and the resultant feelings of hatred in connection with preverbal questions the young child has about sexuality. (Klein, in another work (1975a, p. 360), states that feelings of hatred and persecution feed each other; the above-mentioned hated object is therefore experienced as being persecutory.) So, this aspect of basic assumption life, related to persecutory feelings associated with the group's inability to appropriately use time, can be linked to the influence and anxieties surrounding the pre-genital issues which constitute the earliest phases of the Oedipal conflict.

Another feature of all basic assumption groups is that development is conspicuously absent. Development, for Bion, means ". . . the painful bringing together of the primitive and the sophisticated" (1968, p. 159), and is envisioned therefore as a transcendence of essential conflict. He says that development means behavior based on the understanding that one is fed as one feeds, is fleeing as one fights, and is being created as one creates. Although Bion gives examples of groups' flights into schisms in order to avoid development, he is unclear about the nature of its relationship with the basic assumptions. It would seem, however, that in terms of his description of, and easily observable data to be found in groups acting on basic assumptions, there is no awareness of apparent contradictions and consequently no possibility of attempting to transcend such contradictions. For instance, the apparent contradiction between primitive and sophisticated processes must be appreciated before it can be integrated or transcended.

Bion states that in all basic assumption groups, leader selection is based on covert issues which may appear to be at odds with the overt rationale given for the selection. Leadership in such groups, serves a defensive function to the exclusion of any primary task related purpose. Group members want the leader to take all responsibility for everything which occurs in the group. The leader is also expected to act out certain irrational and largely unconscious conflicts thereby warding off the anxieties associated with them.

Certain members in every group engaged in basic assumption processes will spontaneously fill these leadership roles. This capacity to spontaneously join with the group in its irrationality is called, "valency." Each group member, due in part to his/her personal history, has varying degrees of valency for each basic assumption.

Turquet (1974) extends some of Bion's points about the shared aspects of the various basic assumption processes. He indicates that:

> . . . such groups are not primarily interested in interactions with their environment. They are self-contained, closed systems and, as such, are not like the sophisticated work group, which is interested in predictions and consequences. Hence, they have little or no desire to know, since knowledge might be an embarrassment. . . . In the main, responsibility is left to the leader. External reality is . . . to be avoided. . . . Outside is death; inside is life. (p. 358)

He also notes that basic assumption processes can be identified by the "as if" character of the group's unpremeditated impulsivity. He adds that such groups have no conscious expectations, they merely have a belief that somehow the leader will provide well and things will get done. This "as if" behavior also includes the group behavior as if it were self-contained. He also notes that the leadership concepts brought into play by groups engaged in such processes contain a universally mythical quality.

Turquet's final comments regarding the distinguishing features of basic assumption processes have to do with the group's sometimes painful, indeed, sometimes fatal, concreteness; they exhibit intensely de-skilled behavior (behaving as if they did not know or understand things which are in their common fund of information). Structures of organization, if they do exist, become important for their own sake rather than as an aid toward primary task accomplishment.

Types of Basic Assumption Processes

The only major element necessary to complete a thumbnail sketch of Bion's thoughts on group life are his descriptions of the three types of basic assumption or "as if" behaviors. Although Turquet (1974) added a fourth basic assumption process to the original three and called it, "basic assumption oneness," I chose not to include it because I think it is not sufficiently distinguishable in practice or in theory from the other basic assumptions. Bion (1968) identifies the original three as: basic assumption dependency, fight/flight, and pairing. Within what he calls the proto-mental system, ". . . in which physical and psychological or mental are undifferentiated . . ." (1968, p. 102), all three basic assumptions exist at all times; however, only one becomes manifest for observation at any one time, while the other two remain in a latent state.

In the fight/flight basic assumption processes, the group behaves as if it has met solely for the purpose of fighting or fleeing from an enemy. Gould (1977) notes that paranoid-schizoid position anxieties and use of defenses is most closely associated with basic assumption fight/flight and Bion (1968, p. 166) associates anger and hatred with basic assumption fight/flight. Therefore, during fight/flight

processes, the group expects the leader to find or invent an enemy that will justify for them their feeling of being persecuted and the associated rage and hatred which then has a target (the new-found enemy). The leader of such a group must be typically aided by a certain flair for what Shapiro (1965) has termed a paranoid style of behavior and experiencing of the world. The enemy may or may not be concrete or even definable but it is necessary to always feel the presence of this enemy and to know that he/she/it is capable of arbitrary and immediate full-scale attack on the group and is probably committing subtle sabotage at all times. Such a leader in some ways fits what Karraz (1968) termed "the champion of the cause" who can mobilize the group around various causes by guilt inducing but vague charges. The wish of the group is safety from a clear and present danger of annihilation from what Klein might well call hostile forces. Victory is defined as survival. The anxieties peculiar to these group processes have to do with hatred for the enemy and the attendant fears of retribution and subsequent annihilation. The observable defenses against such anxieties include an anti-developmental adherence to current norms and rules and a belief in the necessity for expediency of behavior (the group has no time to deal with injured or needy members). Splitting tends to take the form of an all-bad enemy and an all-good group.

In basic assumption dependency processes, members behave as if their purpose was to be fed by the leader or to infantalize and feed the leader; this constitutes the dual nature of basic assumption dependency which Bion describes. Gould (1977) notes that depressive position anxieties and use of defenses are more salient during basic assumption dependency processes and Bion (1968, p. 166) associates guilt and

depression with basic assumption dependency. During dependency processes, the group expects the leader to allow them to assuage their guilt by reparatively taking care of him/her or to alleviate their despair that they killed the good object by demonstrating his/her indomitable health and good will by endlessly nurturing them. As long as possible, in basic assumption dependency processes, members avoid selecting one leader, preferring instead to believe that the leader is hidden and that acts of leadership are beclouded in mystery. The membership wishes to have every desire, whim, and need fulfilled, preferably without being troubled to actively solicit its fulfillment, and to have an exclusive relationship with the provider. The anxieties aroused have largely to do with fears similar to infantile fear about starving to death or conversely in the situation of feeding the leader, a fear one will be robbed empty of everything one has to give. Observable defenses against such anxieties include postponement of the appointment of a concrete (and therefore potentially fallible) leader, and adherence to rigidly observed rules. Splitting across the member-leader role boundary takes the form of identifying the group as bad and needy and the leader as all-giving and good (or the reverse in the dual situation).

Basic assumption pairing is manifest in a group behaving as if it had met solely for the purpose of awaiting in hopeful anticipation the creation and birth of a Messiah or Messianic idea. Gould (1977) states that Oedipal anxieties and defenses come to the fore during basic assumption pairing and Bion (1968, p. 166) links Messianic hope with this group process. During pairing processes, the group expects the leader to provide them with hope by remaining unborn--thus, allowing the

group to pursue fruitless, pseudo-intimate relationships, thereby not running the risk of loosing anything. The leader, while such processes occur, may be the unborn answer to the group's hopes and dreams; or the leadership may be shared by a pair of members of the same or opposite sex who engage in intense and extended conversation having nothing to do with the primary task, while the rest of the group listens in hopeful silence. The wish of the group is to create a resolution of all its conflicts and painful dilemmas by waiting for, but not working toward, a utopian future. The anxieties, according to Bion (1968, p. 163), which are associated with these processes stem from primitive Oedipal conflicts based on part-object relationships. He adds that, "This anxiety compels individuals to seek allies. This derivation of the impulse to pair is cloaked by the apparently rational explanation in the pairing group that the motive is sexual and the object reproduction" (p. 63). The observable defenses include, as in the other two basic assumptions, adherence to non-developmental rules. Also in evidence is the "killing off" of any person or idea claiming to be the utopian visions born; either the person or the idea is attacked and effectively ignored or the group divides into a new and an old group via schism. This happens because the Messiah in a pairing group, must remain unborn; otherwise, there would be nothing to hopefully await--this purpose of the group must be maintained.

Integrationists

Durkin (1972) briefly mentioned the intriguing nature of an integration of analytic group therapy and general systems theory. Durkin's paper deserves scrutiny since it is one of the very few published papers that addresses directly the general topic area of this dissertation.

The essential purpose of her work was to clarify the differences and similarities between analytic group therapy and the position put forth by the systems theorists.

One useful point Durkin makes (1972) is that the practical aspects of the analysis of transference are not so different from the "here and now" clinical interests of the "group dynamics and communications therapists" (p. 14). She notes that the behaviors upon which interpretations are based, are the same behaviors to be found and used by the systems group therapists. She further states that these behaviors occur in the here and now in either type of group and are used as such. One other contribution Durkin makes (1972) is that she feels that even when agreeing with other analytic theorists' views on ". . . the group equivalent of the transference neurosis. . . . [one can note] that close inspection of the nature of this interaction reveals individual trends that cannot be attributed solely to unconscious infantile motivations; rather it is multidetermined: The individual's input is also derived from physiological and complex current psychological needs" (p. 15).

There are, I think, two difficulties with her work. First, she assembles such varied thinkers as Freud, Hartmann, and Ezriel into a group she labels as analytic, but does not address herself to the general differences among them. Second, she sets out to answer systems theory criticisms, a task which, on occasion, led her to take a one-sided view of the differences between the two schools of thought. Her statements, in the article, can be carried further toward an integration of the two theories by narrowing the definition of analytic group theory. Once the theories have been more precisely identified, specific links and extensions of the theories can be made before the

applications of the theories are discussed. For instance, one would need to know first whether an integrative understanding of transference theory were possible before one discussed the application of transference interpretation.

Many other theorists such as Miller and Rice speak of organizations as open systems and to some extent address the defensive nature of organizational structure in object relations terms. However, they do not include the variety of communication systems concepts that have been developed, choosing rather, to discuss only a series of issues related to boundaries such as boundary management and transactions, role boundary, task boundary, and sentient boundary. These concepts are invaluable in studying groups but more can be done to integrate more recent systems theory.

Rice (1976) stated the following about the boundary around the individual: "'Individual' has, therefore, little meaning as a concept except in relationships with others. He uses them and they him, to express views, take action and play roles. The individual is a creature of the group, the group of the individual. Each, according to his capacity and experience, carries within him the groups of which he has been and is a member" (p. 38). The first sentence reads amazingly like what Birdwhistell (1959) said and what Ruesch and Bateson said (1968): "The treatment of persons as individuals seems to be an expression of the fact that every person is a representative and member of a group" (p. 109).

Overall, both Miller and Rice in their various writings use general systems theory in some fundamental ways, but, do not make use of the advances in systems communication theory, and hint at the object

relations theory connections with their group theory. They also make a strong case for the applicability of their systemic view of organizations to the study of groups in general and individuals.

This concludes my presentation of the essential points of object relations group theory. I have addressed the major aspects of Bion's theory and its Kleinian roots. In future chapters, the integration I shall set forth will rely upon the definitions which can be found in this and the preceding chapter.

Chapter III

Bion created a model which helps describe the motivational underpinning of certain processes in group life; he named them basic assumption and work group processes. I would like to suggest in this chapter that there are communicational imperatives associated with these processes. I shall begin by making the necessary differentiations between work and basic assumption life in communicational terms. Then I shall present the concept of an "essential interaction" for each basic assumption and analyze the communicational vehicle associated with it. At the end of the chapter, I shall provide an example of group analysis using the integration presented.

Basic Assumption and Work Groups

Bion and others repeatedly mention that basic assumption life often involves rapid and almost continuous shifts from one type of basic assumption to another. Behavioral and affective changes can be noted. However, the general character of basic assumption life is evident in a relatively stable fashion. There is a decreased pursuit of reality testing and reality tested activities. The members appear to have made a common set of assumptions about the boundaries which define the outer limits of their systemic relationship (see above, Chapter Two). Within these limits, the group avoids its task by waiting, by de-skilling itself or its leader, or by fighting or fleeing from an enemy.

Just as one basic assumption cannot be seen in pure culture, so too neither complementary nor symmetrical communication can be seen in pure

culture. Rather, both sets of things oscillate in a continuous progression of changes which are associated with each other. Since communication is the variable which makes the basic assumptions observable, they are in theory and in practice inseparable. There is a correlation between motivational process change and communicational pattern change.

The distinction Turquet (1974, pp. 349-371) makes between basic assumption and work group processes in open systems can be further specified by including more concepts from systems communication group theory. He makes a point of the major differences which exist between the two processes in the leader-follower relationships. Turquet notes that, "The leader of a work group is a 'first among equals,' having, like the other members of the group, skills for primary-task implementation . . ." (1974, p. 363). Essentially, he is saying that during work group processes both symmetrical and complementary communication occur among the various members in their roles at different times. However, complementary communication occurs chiefly across the leader-follower boundary, due in part to the specialized leader role having to do with the executive decision-making authority of the leader. The leader at any given time is selected relative to his/her special skills and talents relative to current task requirements. I would add that in basic assumption processes, complementary communication also occurs across the leader-follower boundary as does symmetrical communication among followers. However, the nature of each communication style is as different as are the internal states related to basic assumption and work group processes.

Turquet states (1974) that within the basic assumption processes, defensive splitting and projection:

> . . . tend to increase the absence of responsibility; responsibility is elsewhere linked to the disowned parts of the self, which are also projected elsewhere. They increase the power of, and hence the dependency on, the leader. For, by projection, the leader becomes the sole repository of power, skills, and reality testing. They also increase the cold, unfriendly, even persecutory nature of the world outside the group, leading to various fears . . . which again increase the strength of the centripetal forces within the Ba group. (p. 369, emphasis mine)

In other words, he is addressing himself to a change brought about through the unbridled use of splitting and projection. In systems communication terms, the vehicles for these changes are described.

During basic assumption processes, members behave as if an increasing gulf exists between their leader and themselves and as if their own communicational symmetry were based on inflexible equality--interchangeability and ultimately indistinguishability. The relationship between leader and follower may stretch so far as to break and another leader must be found. The old one is, in true basic assumption style, discarded. The escalated symmetry among followers can also oscillate to the point of shaking itself down, an event which can be followed by reconstitution of basic assumption life. Rigid complementarity and escalated symmetry mark basic assumption processes from work group processes.

Essential Interactions

In each of the basic assumptions, in order to make communicational analyses of the interactions in a group, the "essential interaction" must be identified. The interaction without which the basic assumption could not exist must be singled out for this special scrutiny. If one looks at randomly selected bits of interaction in the various basic

assumption processes, it should come as no great surprise that one is then not able to make any consistent differentiations among them based on communicational patterns. However, when the single most significant interactional sequences are chosen, then clear differentiations appear.

Basic assumption dependency cannot exist without the interactions between the party who nurtures and the party who receives that nurturance and feels needy of it. In basic assumption fight/flight, it is the interaction between the group and its enemy with whom they fight or from whom they flee. In basic assumption pairing, the only behaviorally significant or recognized relationship in the group is the group's future relationship with an absent party who will save them, resolve all their difficulties, and so forth. These are the three essential interactions without which each basic assumption would loose its distinctive character. These interactions will be discussed in terms of systems communications theory and object relations group theory.

It is necessary to include that at least one of the two parties must interpret from the interaction that a given type of communication and process is occurring. When time has been allowed for defenses to be mobilized and homeostatic mechanisms to be set in place, based on the interactional relationship one party perceives, it increases the probability that the other party will, if the valency is at all favorable for that basic assumption, supply the expected half of the interaction. For example, as long as one party interprets the other's communication as a symmetrical escalation, and responds in kind, it will not be long before a mutually participated in fight/flight symmetrical escalation is under way.

It is difficult to imagine basic assumption dependency being present without the communication patterns being predominantly if not exclusively complementary. Dependency is predicated, by definition, on a superior-inferior configuration communicationally. There is a presupposition that one party is competent in the type of nurturance required by the other party who is de-skilled or not capable of getting this nurturance in any other way. Such a situation mobilizes anxieties relating to early development and finds adulthood expression in the anxiety that the nurturer will not be able to give enough, that he/she will vindictively stop nurturing in retaliation for the hostility group members feel for the inevitable inadequacy of what they receive. In the face of such anxiety, which harks back to infantile anxiety over being left to die, a variety of individual defenses are mobilized and soon become observable as group level phenomena: defenses such as splitting and projective identification. Communicationally, systemic homeostatic mechanisms are deployed at the same time the defenses become observable. They function to decrease deviation from the current communication pattern and basic assumption process. Such homeostatic mechanisms in the communication system resonate with and amplify the operant basic assumption process.

It is difficult to imagine basic assumption fight/flight without the communication pattern between the group and its enemy being exclusively symmetrical from the viewpoint of at least one of the participants. Of course, similar to what occurs in basic assumption dependency, early anxieties are mobilized and defenses are brought into play. Simultaneous with group level defenses becoming observable, homeostatic mechanisms are set in place at the systemic level. Again

the potential exists for this basic assumption to be amplified in similar fashion to the basic assumption dependency amplification described above, although the content, of course would be different.

Might there be a third type of schizmogenesis? Complementary, symmetrical, and non-relational. The latter being most closely associated with basic assumption pairing. The essential interaction in basic assumption pairing is an anticipated interaction with an absent party for whom the group hopefully waits. It is not a matter of communicational urgency or importance then, what their relationship is with one another. Pseudomutuality exists here in a way it does not exist in any other basic assumption. In pseudomutuality, neither complementary nor symmetrical communication truly exists because the two or more people are not actually concerned with one another because to be "distracted" by that would be to be distracted by the here-and-now which is taboo or at least antithetical for a continuation of pairing processes. When one's orientation is totally dedicated toward a future relationship with an absent party, then one cannot have investments in the current building of relationships. The future will arrange whatever needs to be arranged via the awaited absent party. The communication in the here-and-now therefore, can be observed to be enacted with the emphasis being on behaving as if members know each other without being troubled with the details of finding out about each other. It can be observed that people neither consistently seek to be one up nor one down nor do they seek equality, they seek to have no current relationship, they seek to know as little as possible about each other, content with their idyllic images of each other in future relationships.

Whereas complementary communication rigidifies and symmetrical communication escalates in schizmogenesis (i.e. progressive changes) non-relational communication would fragment.

Illustration

The most common basic assumption in a classroom is dependency expressed via complementary communication which is found in the essential interaction between the teacher and the students. The teacher gives lectures, reading assignments, tests, and grades; students, on the other hand, take notes and tests and get assignments and grades. The teacher is in the superior position while the students are in the subordinate position both in basic assumption and communicational terms. Although dependency and complementarity are the dominant themes of the essential interaction, there can be sufficient flexibility in the system to allow for symmetrical communication with fight/flight basic assumption (perhaps in the form of ideological or philosophical debate). Similarly, sufficient flexibility can exist to allow for non-relational communication and pairing basic assumption (perhaps in the form of working toward the creation of new ideas).

Aspects of the depressive position (Klein, 1975b) have significant implications for adequately describing the dependency position. The teacher is the good object who is sometimes idealized; he/she is the giver of needed information, of order, and of rewards. However, the teacher is also recognized as a bad object who frustrates students by giving boring lectures, difficult exams, and unfair grades. The wish to destroy the bad object is primarily held in check by the fear that the good object will thereby also be destroyed. The students seek to make reparation to the teacher for their destructive impulses by pleasing

him/her. This latter also occurs in order to placate the teacher for feared retributions for the shameful impulses. Communicationally, this internal, largely unconscious, state of affairs becomes observable when students speak deferentially to teachers, when they take notes actively (never to look at these notes again), nod in silent, respectful agreement at regular intervals during lectures, and when they seek an exclusive relationship with the teacher, while ignoring classmates to the point of spending months with them without ever learning their names. The communication system reinforces the basic assumption process and visa versa. Therefore, if the complementary communication rigidifies, the basic assumption dependency processes are amplified, which in turn reinforces complementary patterns. For example, behaving more and more deferentially is tantamount to behaving as if one is more and more de-skilled while the object of one's deference is more and more awesomely skilled. Similarly, it means that as one's anxieties are less and less reality oriented, one is less capable of participating in work group processes. Consequently, rigidification of complementary communication in a dependency group tends to be associated with a decrease in task accomplishment. As students become more convinced of their own lack of scholarly worth, they become less able to learn; as teachers become more and more narcissistically gratified by the student's idealizations of them, they become less able to teach effectively. Associated with this process is the likelihood that when other basic assumption and communicational patterns emerge in the group, they too will be less task oriented than they might be.

Other examples of all three aspects of the integrated model I have proposed in this chapter will be provided in the next chapter along with a view of systemic defenses.

Chapter IV

Citing clinical examples of various theoretical constructs often is such a cumbersome and arduous procedure that it is frequently left out in theoretical works. However, to omit examples is often to leave matters more unclear than is necessary. In terms of this dissertation, the ideal would be to find verbatim transcripts of clinical interventions of one sort or another and interpret the data using both object relations and systems communication group theories. The analysis would then have to include not only the person or persons who are in treatment and their system of communication among themselves, but also the communication system that is developed with the therapist. Without elaborating the complexity of such an analysis, suffice it to say it exceeds the relatively simple purpose of illustration which I have set for myself.

By using a well known and extremely well crafted play, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by E. Albee (1962), the purposes of illustration are well served. The dialogue in the play is compelling in its realism, yet condensed sufficiently by virtue of poetic license to be manageable in size.

The use of literature for clinical interpretation is not without problems. The couple is not real, the dialogue is an artistic distillate, and certainly the verbal skill and emotional stamina of these characters exceeds that of any couple known to man. The playwright plays an unobservable role in the presentation and selection of material and as Watzlawick, et al. (1967) point out, many interpretations of this play exist which may be equally valid, and may

or may not be harmonious with the conclusions drawn here. With these caveats in mind, I feel that the appropriateness of using this play as a basis for clinical interpretation remains virtually unaltered.

Some general aspects of group dynamics and family communication patterns as they appear in George and Martha's marital dyad will be explored in terms of an integration of object relations group theory with systems communication group theory. The Watzlawick, et al. (1967) interpretation of this same play will be included, expanded upon, and integrated with object relations group theory.

Families behave in many ways which are similar to non-familial groups. Both types of groups operate out of basic assumption and work group processes, both experience the consequences of task accomplishment and task abandonment, and finally, both involve systems of communication. The overall dynamics of George and Martha's marital dyad are characterized by an escalating symmetrical communication system in which fight/flight is the dominant basic assumption. Occasional interludes of basic assumption pairing will also be discussed. These recurrent episodes of pairing happen when they discuss their imaginary son, so I shall touch on this family myth as being of particular importance.

The format of this presentation will be as follows. First, I shall make some interpretations of the play based on systems communication theory and thus sketch the structure of this system. Then I shall offer some interpretations of the play based on Bion and Klein in terms of object relations group theory. The final section of this chapter will include an analysis of the play based on an integrated model of group theory which combines the insights provided by each of its two constituent theories. The concluding summary of this chapter will indicate in

what ways the integrated analysis deepens and broadens an understanding of group life.

Systems Analysis

In this section, I shall briefly outline the symmetrical communication patterns of George and Martha and the complementary patterns of Nick and Honey, the pragmatic paradoxes in George and Martha's system, as well as the homeostatic mechanisms, and negative feedback loops. I shall also describe the systemic structure around the "son myth."

George and Martha's symmetrical coalition is based on such an intense emphasis on their equalness that an interchangeability of roles has developed between them. Almost any segment of dialogue between George and Martha would serve to illustrate escalated symmetrical interaction since it characterizes their entire system. In the following exchange, they each attempt to outshout, outmaneuver, and generally get the better of each other on the verbal battlefield. Martha has just registered an insult filled objection to the game which just concluded and was called "Get the Guests." In that episode, George had succeeded in reducing Honey to tears and alcohol-riddled despair, and displaying her husband, Nick, as the betrayer of her confidence.

Martha: You've really screwed up, George.

George: (Spitting it out) Oh, for God's sake, Martha!

Martha: I mean it . . . you really have.

George: (Barely contained anger now) You can sit there in that chair of yours, you can sit there with the gin running out of your mouth, and you can humiliate me, you can tear me apart . . . ALL NIGHT . . . and that's perfectly all right . . . that's O.K. . . .

Martha: YOU CAN STAND IT!

George: I CANNOT STAND IT!

Martha: YOU CAN STAND IT!! YOU MARRIED ME FOR IT!! (A silence)

George: (Quietly) That is a desperately sick lie.

Martha: DON'T YOU KNOW IT, EVEN YET?

George: (Shaking his head) Oh . . . Martha.

Martha: My arm has gotten tired whipping you.

George: (Stares at her in disbelief) You're mad.

Martha: For twenty-three years!

George: You're deluded . . . Martha, you're deluded.

Martha: IT'S NOT WHAT I'VE WANTED!

George: I thought at least you were . . . on to yourself. I didn't know. I . . . didn't know.

Martha: (Anger taking over) I'm on to myself.

George: (As if she were some sort of bug) No . . . no . . . you're . . . sick.

Martha: (Rises--screams) I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SICK! (Albee, 1962, pp. 152-153) [All future references to this play will be made by page number only.]

One of their relationship rules would seem to be that each identifies the other as a tricky and potentially lethal enemy. On the face of it, the most baffling question one could ask of George and Martha is why is it so important to each that the other is proven wrong? By the power of what logic would that make the one who is not proven wrong, right? This is part of what Watzlawick, et al. (1967) call a "game without end" (pp. 232-236). If either party suddenly were to concede, by their system rules, the battle would have to begin again. Any concession is merely interpreted as a seductive maneuver by the enemy. The pragmatic paradox of this is that, although each battle has the acrimony of a "war to end all wars," it nevertheless is a battle in a war which, by its own

definitions, cannot end. Each argument in this sense, serves to encourage both George and Martha to redouble their efforts since each argument proves once again that the other is truly "out to get" him/her. Each passing argument becomes negative feedback into the system.

It is also important to note that each of them has punctuated their communication in such a way that the other is presented as being responsible for their fights, for the escalation of their battles, and in general for the miserable state they find themselves in. In the preceding excerpt, Martha punctuates their communication to begin with George's humiliation of Honey, blaming him for what happened thereafter while George, on the other hand, punctuates their communication beginning with Martha's drunkenness and humiliation of him, blaming everything that followed on her. Each of them thereby avoids taking any responsibility for what has transpired, they each prefer to continue repeatedly (seemingly endlessly, in fact) seeing the other as the sole initiator of the evening's violence.

The stability of their original symmetry hinged on each playing his/her expected role over and over. Of course, over the twenty plus years of their marriage, their mutual expectations became quite complex and included a variety of games and rules to these "games," such as not mentioning their "son" to anyone else, and keeping many other family secrets to themselves. At some point, they began to actively solicit and include participation from other people. The purpose of the "extras" in their relationship must, of course, be complex and change somewhat depending on whom they invite. Therefore, it is best to look at the data that is presented in the play.

Nick sums up his role for the marital system (George and Martha's) just after the climax of "Get the Guests" when he is about to follow his sobbing wife from the room. He is furious that his image has been damaged in public and threatens George: "I'll play the charades like you've got 'em set up. . . . I'll play in your language. . . . I'll be what you say I am." To which Geoge replies: "You are already . . . you just don't know it" (p. 150). It suits both George and Martha's purposes for Nick to shine in his full glory as a self-centered "stud." Nick is, in a sense, a foil for both George and Martha. Both of them spend most of their time focusing on the other, predicting next moves, planning counter attacks, feeling angry at the other, and so forth; Nick, on the other hand, rarely gives any thought to anything or anyone but his image. George and Martha can use Nick as a homeostatic target. When Martha had reached very close to the upper limit of their symmetrical communication system, in "Humiliate the Host," the systemic deviation had to be brought back into control. "Humiliate the Host" is the most intense of a series of escalations; the system cannot continue to function under the stress of continued uninterrupted escalation. Nick becomes the target in "Get the Guests" (Honey being hurt in the process) and this interaction has a stabilizing effect on Geroge and Martha's system. Therefore, Nick's role in terms of George and Martha's marital dyad is that of homeostatic mechanism in communication systems terms.

George and Martha take turns throughout in using Nick as target practice to relieve the tension between them. Another example of this occurs in Act One ("Fun and Games") just after Martha has launched an oblique but humiliating dig at George's professional role, which she crowns in the following way:

Martha: [. . .] (To the others) George is bogged down in the History Department. He's an old bog in the History Department, that's what George is. A bog. . . . A fen. . . . A.G.D. swamp. Ha, ha, ha HA! A SWAMP! Hey, swamp! Hey SWAMPY!

George: (With a great effort controls himself . . . then, as if she had said nothing more than "George, dear". . . .) Yes, Martha? Can I get you something?

Martha: (Amused at his game) Well . . . uh . . . sure, you can light my cigarette, if you're of a mind to.

George: (Considers, then moves off) No . . . there are limits. I mean, man can put up with only so much without he descends a rung or two on the old evolutionary ladder . . . (Now a quick aside to Nick) . . . which is up your line . . . (Then back to Martha) . . . sinks, Martha, and it's a funny ladder . . . you can't reverse yourself . . . start back up once you're descending.
(Martha blows him an arrogant kiss)
Now . . . I'll hold your hand when it's dark and you're afraid of the bogey man, and I'll tote your gin bottles out after midnight, so no one'll see . . . but I will not light your cigarette. And that, as they say, is that.
(Brief silence)

Martha: (Under her breath) Jesus! (Then, immediately, to Nick) Hey, you played football, hunh?

Honey: (As Nick seems sunk in thought) Dear. . . .

Nick: Oh! Oh, yes . . . I was a . . . quarterback . . . but I was much more . . . adept . . . at boxing, really.

Martha: (With great enthusiasm) BOXING! You hear that, George?

George: (Resignedly) Yes, Martha.

(pp. 50-51)

In this way George has signalled the way to Martha (with his aside to Nick) who follows suit by detouring their escalating symmetrical exchange to Nick in order to at least momentarily provide a respite.

Each time such a homeostatic mechanism is employed communicationally, George and Martha indicate where their current communicational boundaries or limits are. This is one way in which they keep their symmetry inflexibly intact.

In the above segments of dialogue, several general principles hold true. In their open communication system, George and Martha have constructed an archetypic escalating symmetrical pattern which is cooled off only by such homeostatic mechanisms as laughter, shifts in the location of the battlefield, and talk of their imaginary son (to be taken up separately below).

It is in one area alone that George and Martha's marital dyad appears to be developing. This area has to do with their myth of an imaginary son. The general inflexibility of their communicational system has been demonstrated in part by a brief analysis of the multitudinous homeostatic mechanisms in their communicated relationship. The son myth is a special homeostatic mechanism communicationally in this play because it is the only one which, throughout the play, undergoes extensive change ultimately including a change in its own boundaries and nature.

After carefully tracing the course of this change, I shall identify the type of development it is a part of in their system and how significant this development is predictively.

While George and Martha do give some indication of what their feelings were about their "son," they cannot shed light on how they in the past communicated about him. It is possible, therefore, to describe their current communication patterns in regard to their imaginary son.

In order to assess a change, it is necessary to know as much as possible about the situation before, during, and after the change. Not much data is available about the nature of the son myth prior to the opening of the play. The only indications which are to be found are once at the beginning of the play and once toward the end. In the beginning of the first act, George reiterates the rule to Martha about not talking about their son to their about-to-arrive guests. They have been engaged in bickering since they got home from her father's faculty party, and she just told George that they are about to have guests, although it is 2 a.m. and orders him to answer the ringing doorbell.

Martha: (Shouting . . . to the door) C'MON IN! (To George, between her teeth) I said, get over there!

George: (Moves a little toward the door, smiling slightly) All right, love . . . whatever love wants. (Stops) Just don't start on the bit, that's all.

Martha: The bit? What kind of language is that? What are you talking about?

George: The bit. Just don't start in on the bit.

Martha: You imitating one of your students, for God's sake? What are you trying to do? WHAT BIT?

George: Just don't start in on the bit about the kid, that's all.

Martha: What do you take me for?

(p. 18)

With this bit of dialogue, the rule has been set out clearly and with emphasis indicating that to bring the son myth up is an unequivocably disallowed act. It also indicates that to bring up such a clearly understood and for-years-abided-by rule is an insult to the intelligence. Indeed, after Martha says, "What do you take me for?", their dialogue continues:

George: Much too much.

Martha: (Really angered) Yeah? Well, I'll start in on the kid if I want to.

George: Just leave the kid out of this.

Martha: (Threatening) He's mine as much as he is yours. I'll talk about him if I want to.

George: I'd advise against it, Martha.

Martha: Well, good for you. (Knock) C'mon in. Get over there and open the door!

George: You've been advised.

Martha: Yeah . . . sure. Get over there!

(pp. 18-19)

It would seem that Martha is angered in part, because George has ordered her not to do something she feels it is obvious she should not do. This is additionally aggravating, not only because it is insulting, but also because it comes in the midst of each of them disobeying the other's orders in their own characteristic style. In the midst of their slowly escalating symmetrical communication, George has participated in creating a double bind with Martha. In essence he is saying "Obey me" (and do not talk about son myth) while this assertion is part of communication pattern of dares, challenges, and the general undermining of each's authority by the other. This latter means that George has just also challenged Martha to "Disobey what I just said." Since these two orders are mutually exclusive and occur in a relationship which has high psychological survival value to each of them, the requirements for a double bind have been met. Such a paradoxical injunction cannot be obeyed without being disobeyed nor can it be disobeyed without being obeyed. Adding to these troubles is the fact that Martha does not

consciously want to break their rule, as evidenced by her later wildly grief-stricken denial (pp. 236-237) of having broken the rule, while at the same time she recalls having consciously wanted to talk about their "son" on so many previous occasions. The data for this latter is Martha saying precisely that just after her denial (p. 237) in Act Three.

According to Watzlawick, et al. (1967), their imaginary son is an example of a family myth whose function in their communication system is to be a homeostatic mechanism. In other words, they can talk with each other in a symmetrical manner only within the mutually agreed on boundaries which they have set to ensure the maintenance of the sytem. Symmetrical escalations which would lead to the destruction of their mythical son, are explicitly not allowed.

Based on this data, one can surmise that before the opening of the play, Martha was internally painfully conflicted about having an imaginary son about whom she could say nothing to anyone but George. One can also say that it seems very likely that the topic of their "son" has never before been used as mutually offensive weaponry in a public battle. And one can note that the groundwork for a change in the son myth has been laid by the opening double bind. This is so, because no matter what either of them do within their current communicational structure, the paradoxical injunction must, by definition, be violated. The importance of this cannot be underestimated because it centers on the son myth. This myth is unquestionably among those things which are at the center of their communicated relationship. They have spent years creating a life history for this "son" as evidenced toward the end of the play during Martha's recitation of his life story. Therefore, violating the paradoxical injunction which forms the current

boundary around the myth, means inevitably, that a change must needs occur in the very center of their relationship; either in the communicational structure which contains the myth, which would constitute a second order change (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) or in the myth itself which would constitute a first order change (Watzlawick, et al.,1974) since it would leave their communicational structure intact.

As it happens, Martha violates the paradoxical injunction by mentioning their son to Honey, and George subsequently destroys the myth itself. With this "killing off" they have destroyed the homeostatic mechanism which was central to their maintenance of a symmetrical coalition according to Watzlawick, et al. (1967, p. 177). The play ends with George and Martha at the crossroads of a change in their relationship, rejecting the vaguely conceived idea of substituting a "dead son myth," and being too tired to react in any fully elaborated form to the changes the absence of this myth has on their relationship.

George: (Long silence) It will be better.

Martha: (Long silence) I don't . . . know.

George: It will be . . . maybe.

Martha: I'm . . . not . . . sure.

George: No.

Martha: Just . . . us?

George: Yes.

Martha: I don't suppose, maybe, we could. . . .

George: No, Martha.

Martha: Yes. No.

(pp. 240-241)

This poignant exchange with its emphasis on "Just . . . us?" indicates the enormous challenge to their marital system the elimination of their homeostatic mechanism presents.

However, the destruction of the myth took place within the framework of their symmetrical coalition having escalated beyond its own boundaries; it literally shook itself down. The play closes with a complementary interaction between them in which George tenderly and sincerely comforts Martha who, for the first time in the play, tells George with straightforward simplicity that she is afraid. George nods slowly, while gently holding her, and the play ends. They can reconstruct their relationship, incorporating more complementary communication, and thus decrease their pathological inflexibility of communication; however, no one will ever know if this was their choice. The important issue is that they now have the choice.

Honey and Nick allow the audience to see fleeting glimpses of their complementary style of communication. One such vignette is set in Act One, the "Fun and Games" portion of the play, after George has hyperbolyzed and ridiculed Nick's profession by elaborating on biologist's supposed goal in their study and research to create the possibilities for test tube babies complete with social uniformity and genetic oppression. He ends by saying that the test tube men would all be as blonde, handsome, and bland as Nick.

Martha: (Salaciously--to Nick) So, everyone's going to look like you, eh?

Nick: Oh, sure. I'm going to be a personal screwing machine!

Martha: Isn't that nice.

Honey: (Her hands over her ears) Dear, you mustn't . . . you mustn't . . . you mustn't.

Nick: (Impatiently) I'm sorry, Honey.

Honey: Such language. It's. . . .

Nick: I'm sorry. All right?

Honey: (Pouting) Well . . . all right. [. . .]

(pp. 68-69)

Later in the play, during Act Two which is called, "Walpurgisnacht," Honey returns to the group after having reached a level of inibriation which requires that she throw up. Nick paternalistically welcomes her back by consolingly suggesting that she sit by his side. Martha demands that George apologize to Honey for making the latter drunk enough to become sick.

Honey: No, now. I . . . I throw up . . . I mean, I get sick . . . occasionally, all by myself . . . without any reason.

George: Is that a fact?

Nick: You're . . . you're delicate, Honey.

Honey: (Proudly) I've always done it.

George: Like Big Ben.

Nick: (A warning) Watch it!

Honey: And the doctors say there's nothing wrong with me . . . organically. You know?

Nick: Of course there isn't.

Honey: Why, just before we got married, I developed . . . appendicitis . . . or everybody thought it was appendicitis . . . but it turned out to be . . . it was a . . . (laughs briefly) . . . false alarm.

(George and Nick exchange glances)

(p. 119)

The undercurrent between Nick and George has to do with the fact that Nick has explained to George that Honey, once she begins to throw up, does so with enormous regularity and that Nick married her in response to what ended up being her hysterical pregnancy.

The communication style between Nick and Honey is repeatedly based on an assumption of his superiority and her inferiority. In terms of the first excerpt, her lack of sophistication is contrasted with his worldliness. Their patterns of communication indicate that their relationship is based, in part, on their assumption that she is a stereotypically provincial and uneducated woman around whom explicit language (especially in regard to words referring to sexuality) must be avoided or at least be put delicately. In the second excerpt, the same is true, and additionally he elaborates his superior position by demonstrating that he is the one who explains complex issues to her, saying that she throws up because she is "delicate." He further elaborates this role by being her protector in the face of George's oblique attacks. A few moments later in the play, Honey mistakes a metaphorical reference to dancing, in the sense of boxers' footwork while they fight, for a reference concretely to dancing (p. 123).

> Honey: Oh, I love dancing.
>
> Nick: He didn't mean that, Honey.
>
> Honey: Well, I didn't think he did! Two grown men dancing . . . heavens!
>
> (p. 124)

Again, Nick reinforces his role of condescending explainer to Honey's role of petulant but uncomprehending child. This pattern continues throughout the play with few variations, in part because Honey is absent

(physically or mentally) for much of the play, due to her state of extreme inibriation. One prediction can be made about Nick and Honey, and that is that Honey is well on her way to becoming an identified patient with her history of somatization, among other things. However, the important point to be made at this juncture is that, communicationally, she is surrounded by infantalization and expectations that she behaves in an empty-headed childish manner; these are expectations she obligingly fulfills and yet resents. Nick's role in her situation cannot be emphasized enough. As long as they maintain a rigid complementarity, she can be expected to exhibit symptoms. It is likely that he prefers to be preoccupied by her symptoms rather than face his own interpersonal lackings or the problems in their relationship which he has equal responsibility for having created.

These are the basic communicational structures which underlie the communicational system described in this play. I have outlined George and Martha's communicated relationship and Nick and Honey's in accordance with systems communication group theory.

Object Relations Analysis

In this section, I shall briefly outline the ubiquitous nature of basic assumption fight/flight in George and Martha's relationship along with the underlying primitive anxieties and defenses which wreak havoc between them. I shall also describe the appearance of pairing basic assumption around the theme of the son myth.

The evidence of basic assumption processes in George and Martha's ongoing vituperations is indisputable. George and Martha certainly do behave as if their only purpose in being together is to fight or flee from their enemy: each other. Each of them attributes all

responsibility for hurt, pain, and humiliation to the other. Their intense irrationality has sufficiently de-skilled them so that they show no sign of being aware of any task or purpose their marriage might serve, save fighting or fleeing.

In true fight/flight mentality, neither of them stops just because an individual might be hurt along the way. The individual sacrificed during the pursuit of the enemy has suffered unavoidable and unlamented wounds. The manner in which they each punctuate their conversations and the events in their lives generally, serves to consistently reinforce the image each has of their relationship. This, in turn, aids in the continuation of fight/flight, since neither then must take responsibility for the casualties of their battles.

George and Martha themselves are aware that their patterns have shifted, that things have changed between them. George outlines the changes: ". . . I'm numbed enough, now, to be able to take you when we're alone. I don't listen to you . . . or when I <u>do</u> listen to you, I sift everything, I bring everything down to reflex response, so I don't really <u>hear</u> you, which is the only way to manage it. But you've taken a new tack, Martha, over the past couple of centuries[. . .]that makes it just too much . . ." (p. 155). Martha's version of the change, of course, focuses on George: "[. . .] SNAP! It went snap tonight at Daddy's party. (Dripping contempt, but there is fury and loss under it) I sat there at Daddy's party, and I watched you . . . I watched you sitting there, and I watched the younger men around you, the men who were going to go somewhere. And I sat there and I watched you, and <u>you</u> weren't <u>there</u>! And it snapped! It finally snapped![. . .]" (p. 158).

It seems that what has changed for each of them intrapsychically, is that each's projective identification with the other as a murderer has become too vivid to ignore or deny any longer. To make any comments about the precise nature of each's projective identification with the other involves a good deal of speculation. I shall indulge briefly in such speculation based on the data in the play, bearing in mind the extreme limitations of the material. George says about Martha that she has "[. . .]a father who really doesn't give a damn whether she lives or dies, who couldn't care less what happens to his only daughter . . ." (p. 225). As with many such assertions in the play, one never knows quite for certain that the truth in any recognizable form is being presented. However, this comment does have the ring of truth to it in light of how Martha herself describes her father and her attitude toward him (p. 185). If George's assertion is true, then it could make sense that Martha's worst terror in terms of important people in her life, especially George, is that they will abandon her and that she will not be able to survive it. This speculation rests upon the assumption that such a fear is not conscious for her and that since it echoes early infantile fears, it could make sense as a basis of her projective identification with George. She could split off these utterly helpless parts of herself to despise them in George and also split-off the murderously enraged part of herself and fear a retribution in kind coming from him.

By contrast, less data is available in the play about George except that he supposedly unintentionally murdered each of his parents separately. Nothing else is mentioned about his relationship with either of them. Even if he did not kill them, the fact that this is the only aspect of his filial role which is mentioned could certainly lend

credence to an alternate understanding of the data, that being that he wished them dead with unusual and abiding passion. In either case, it is clear that the feelings underlying his wish or actions were and are not known to him. In recounting the story as if it happened to someone else, he tells Nick: "[. .] there was this boy who was fifteen, and he had killed his mother with a shotgun some years before--accidentally, completely accidentally, without even an unconscious motivation, I have no doubt, no doubt at all [. .]" (p. 94). He then tells how "this boy" killed his father and that after this happened, the boy "[. .] was put in an asylum. That was thirty years ago. [. .] And I'm told that for these thirty years he has . . . not . . . uttered . . . one . . . sound" (p. 96). Without elaborating the point, it is easy to understand that with such murderous rage unacknowledged it would take no stretch of the imagination to speculate that it is this rage which George has split off and located in Martha, then projectively identifying with it, and fearing retribution in kind from her.

In George and Martha's marital system, there can be no doubt that very primitive anxieties and the defenses against them play a large part in disrupting their day to day life. They each projectively identify with the other in ferocious defense against seemingly lethal anxieties reminiscent of paranoid-schizoid anxiety. The infant fears the bad will overwhelm and destroy the good, that either starvation or deadly retribution in kind will kill him/her. The bad part objects are split off and then they are identified with. In this relationship each of them has located in the other those parts of self they despise and fear the most; they have each located in the other full responsibility for the humiliation they each feel. They have, in terms of this latter, each

set out to unequivocably prove the other's responsibility without any real awareness of their mutual responsibility for the terrifying objects each has disowned. Both George and Martha see the other as the initiator of violence and in fact as a murderer.

Toward the climax of the game known as "Humiliate the Host," Martha is telling the guests about the novel George wrote that her father would not let him publish:

Martha: (Pushing on) Imagine such a thing! A book about a boy who murders his mother and kills his father, and pretends its all an accident!

Honey: (Beside herself with glee) An accident!

Nick: (Remembering something related) Hey . . . wait a minute. . . .

Martha: (Her own voice now) And you want to know the clincher? You want to know what big brave Georgie said to Daddy?

George: NO! NO! NO! NO!

Nick: Wait a minute now. . . .

Martha: Georgie said . . . but Daddy . . . I mean . . . ha, ha, ha, ha . . . but Sir, it isn't a novel at all . . . . (Other voice) Not a novel? (Mimicking George's voice) No, sir . . . it isn't a novel at all. . . .

George: (Advancing on her) You will not say this!

Nick: (Sensing the danger) Hey.

Martha: The hell I won't. Keep away from me, you bastard! (Backs off a little . . . uses George's voice again) No, Sir, this isn't a novel at all . . . this is the truth . . . this really happened. . . . TO ME!

George: (On her) I'LL KILL YOU! (Grabs her by the throat. They struggle)

Nick: HEY! (Comes between them)

Honey: (Wildly) VIOLENCE! VIOLENCE! (George, Martha, and Nick struggle . . . yells, etc.)

Martha: IT HAPPENED! TO ME! TO ME!

George: YOU SATANIC BITCH!

Nick: STOP THAT! STOP THAT!

Honey: VIOLENCE! VIOLENCE! (The other three struggle. George's hands are on Martha's throat. Nick grabs him, tears him from Martha, throws him on the floor. George, on the floor; Nick over him; Martha to one side, her hand on her throat)

(pp. 136-138)

It is not only Martha who sees George as a murderer, but also George who sees Martha this way.

Martha: (Tenderly; moves to touch him) Please, George, no more games; I. . . .

George: (Slapping her moving hand with vehemence) Don't you touch me! You keep your paws clean for the undergraduates!

Martha: (A cry of alarm, but faint)

George: (Grabbing her hair, pulling her head back) Now, you listen to me, Martha; you have had quite an evening . . . quite a night for yourself, and you can't just cut it off whenever you've got enough blood in your mouth. We are going on, and I'm going to have at you, and it's going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. Now I want you to get yourself a little alert. (Slaps her lightly with his free hand) I want a little life in you, baby. (Again)

Martha: (Struggling) Stop it!

George: (Again) Pull yourself together! (Again) I want you on your feet and slugging, sweetheart, because I'm going to knock you around, and I want you up for it. (Again; he pulls away, releases her; she rises)

Martha: All right, George. What do you want, George?

George: An equal battle, baby; that's all.

Martha: You'll get it!

George: I want you mad.

Martha: I'M MAD!!

George: Get madder!

Martha: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

George: Good for you, girl; now, we're going to play this one to the death.

Martha: Yours!

(pp. 208-209)

The fact that they each see the other as a killer, is evidence of the unconscious mortal terror and rage they ardently seek to ward off. They each see themself as the victim of an evil and murderous spouse. This is a result of unconscious splitting inasmuch as each suspects the other of being at the very core all bad, while they themselves are all good. Any untoward behavior each of them is conscious of exhibiting is experienced as a relatively innocent response to the wild ravages enacted by the other. This is, in large part, the fuel which keeps their fight/flight basic assumption going.

Until the very end of the play, when there is some evidence of basic assumption dependency, the only variation in their basic assumption life is the basic assumption pairing which occurs around the theme of their son. During the third act, "The Exorcism," Martha recites with many small pauses between phrases, the story of their son's life. The rhythm of her speech and the non-acrimonious style of her manner and words, lend to the story a certain innocence and certainly a dreamlike quality. This stands in stark contrast to almost everything which precedes the recitation.

During this act, as George escalates his attack using their "son," Martha has, with uncharacteristic simple and moving dignity, tried to

stop him twice before she rises to his bait with a sneer. Ultimately she engages by saying:

Martha: ALL RIGHT!! (By rote; a kind of almost-tearful recitation) Our son. You want our son? You'll have it.

George: You want a drink, Martha?

Martha: (Pathetically) Yes.

Nick: (To Martha kindly) We don't have to hear about it . . . if you don't want to.

George: Who says so? You in a position to set the rules around here?

Nick: (Pause; tight-lipped) No.

George: Good boy; you'll go far. All right, Martha; your recitation, please.

Martha: (From far away) What, George?

George: (Prompting) "Our son. . . ."

Martha: All right. Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty . . . one . . . years ago.

George: (Beginning of quiet asides) You see? I told you.

Martha: It was an easy birth. . . .

George: Oh, Martha; no. You labored . . . how you labored.

Martha: It was an easy birth . . . once it had been . . . accepted, relaxed into.

George: Ah . . . yes. Better.

Martha: It was an easy birth, once it had been accepted, and I was young.

(pp. 216-217)

It seems that what is being subtly evoked is an echo of their past in the midst of a present which alters its meaning. One can easily imagine George and Martha in the past telling each other the "'Our

son . . . '" story. There have been times in their relationship when they spoke of their "son" in the midst of visions of birth, youth, and hope; it seems there were times they spoke of their "son" while engaging in basic assumption pairing.

Martha describes their mythical son as walking "[. . .] evenly between us [. . .]a hand out to each of us for what we could offer [. . .] and these hands, still, to hold us off a bit, for mutual protection [. . .] to protect himself . . . and us" (pp. 221-222). As in pairing group process, there is a quality of hope in her recitation and there is an allusion to what could be, a half-articulated indication of visions of the future when she and her husband may be protected from each other and themselves. With this in mind, it is quite easy to see that this unborn son allows their anxieties and bitter frustrations to abate, even if it is only for the moment. This is how it seems that it used to be, at any rate. She does not rise to George's occasional taunting and baiting, she accepts some of his corrections without a struggle. It would seem that she is replaying this game as they used to together. She sounds a great deal like someone speaking from basic assumption pairing, and he for the most part joins her in this reminiscing.

In the pairing basic assumption process, the Messiah must remain unborn; the group processes are constantly focused on the pair's unending creation of the ultimate resolution of the group's difficulties, anxieties, and frustrations. The predominant feeling is one of hopeful anticipation; the temporal focus is toward the future. George and Martha's son certainly remained unborn; in the midst of their talking about him for years, they never actually had a son. It seems that when George and Martha exchanged views and information about their

imaginary son, they experienced some shred of hope, certainly more than they experienced from their other activities. It was their one consciously chosen act of collaboration, that this mythical son was one thing they shared between them that was never to become public property. As Martha herself says: "[. . .] the one thing, the one person I have tried to protect, to raise above the mire of this vile, crushing marriage; the one light in all this hopeless . . . darkness . . . our SON" (p. 227). Further, this son was to serve as a buffer and protection for each of them, as well as a bond keeping them together.

It must be recalled that the content of the conversation in basic assumption pairing does not matter as much as it does in the other basic assumptions. Martha's expression of soft muted hope is sufficient to blunt even George's rapier tongue, so that his baiting is merely a shadow of what he is capable of. It is possible that in their past pairing processes, they may have used their imaginary son as a weapon in private against each other. However, these exchanges like those during Martha's recitation during Act Three, cannot be considered equivalent to the acrimony of their fight/flight processes. The essential interaction necessary for the identification of pairing processes is present. That essential interaction is the communicational focus on the absent Messianic member, their "son," whose existence is hoped for.

As long as the valency is high for pairing, any communication which would interfere with this unending process of creation is clearly disallowed. The boundaries around the pair are considered inviolable--no one may intrude on the privacy of the pair. The external boundary of their system is rigid, in fact it is inviolable; no outsider may know about their "son" in order for their system to survive as it is. The

importance of this inviolable boundary is clear in the Albee play. Martha violates the boundary herself by telling Honey about their "son" and his birthday. This brings a covert issue into focus in the here-and-now experience of the two outsiders.

Martha's public statement about their son is equivalent to his being born. In a basic assumption group, the birth of the Messiah inevitably leads to the destruction of that Messiah; and indeed, George proceeds to kill him in the same way George presumably killed his father. As I stated in the last section, this myth is central to their relationship. In object relations terms, this means that basic assumption pairing, which in this case has questionable adaptive use, is important to the maintenance of their basic assumption life. When the Messiah is born, the group has no reason to meet, since there is no one to wait for in hopeful anticipation. This is part of the motivation to kill him if he is born. By killing their son, however, they have also killed that for which they were hoping. Therefore, as the play closes, one of the issues they must face is what, if anything, they now will attach their hopes to.

These are the most basic issues of intrapsychic experience and conflict which are evidenced in the play. The primitive paranoid-schizoid anxieties and defenses which are mobilized in George and Martha as well as the operative basic assumptions have been briefly discussed.

Integrated Analysis

In this section, I shall speak of defenses which become systemic homeostatic mechanisms. I shall also describe how one's perspective shifts when defenses are viewed within their communicational context by defining what I have chosen to call symmetrical projective

identification and complementary projective identification. The son myth will be reviewed, and the analysis of it will be extended by defining what I term complementary splitting and systemic narcissism.

Systemically, there is evidence that from a relatively stable albeit unsatisfying relationship, George and Martha have over time become engaged in escalating symmetrical communication with fight/flight basic assumptions. One can hypothesize from the data they give that their former relationship consisted largely of George ignoring or pretending to ignore Martha's comments, requests, and abuses, while Martha launched such communications expecting not to be heard. George for his part, waited for and expected her communications.

Their expectations of one another are worthy of being made into a topic of special interest and significance. The clear majority of their dialogues are spent directly and indirectly proclaiming, or in some other equally unequivocal way, indicating how well each knows the weaknesses and behaviors of the other. They each spend a significant amount of time predicting the other's behaviors. It would seem that after years of such behavior, they became quite accurate in these predictions. But it is not simply a matter of getting to know one another over the years as many couples do, it is the current state of a communication system which has remarkably few variations in patterns that George and Martha have carefully and painstakingly built together. Their projective identifications with each other urgently imposes a repetitious set of communication patterns for each with the other. The same accusations are made with seemingly intolerable regularity. Martha accuses George of being a homicidal maniac and a failure while George accuses Martha of being vicious and cruel as well

as a drunkard. Each accusation, within a short time, is responded to by a counter accusation. Systemically, each regularly made accusation limits the number of possible responses to the options encompassed by a counterattack. Their relationship rules communicationally allow for exceeding little variation. In this sense, their mutual projective identification serves communicationally as a homeostatic mechanism.

This state of affairs, in turn is part of their fight/flight basic assumption life. As such it primarily serves two functions. First, this homeostatic mechanism ensures that neither will have the option to see the other in anything but the role of enemy. Their moments of releasing the other from this projectively identified with role, even in their minds, are noticably rare. Second, it reinforces this basic assumption since one of the results of such a homeostatic mechanism is that the only conceivable variations in such a communicational system of symmetrical escalation is fighting or fleeing. The basic assumption irrationality reinforces the system of communication, and visa versa. It bears emphasis that neither causes the other, that causality is circular in nature.

More can be said about the nature of projective identification in groups. Two foci of attention will be adhered to: first, the nature of the systemic impact on the intrapsychic phenomena of projective identification; and second, the nature of the intrapsychic impact on the systemic evidence of projective identification.

As has been described above, the nature of the systemic resonance of George and Martha's mutual projective identification centers on the function of this defense being homeostatic. What is being kept stable is the symmetrical communication and the fight/flight basic

assumption. This is what I choose to term a systemically symmetrical projective identification. Metacommunicationally, they each regard the other as being equal to or the same as themselves. No differences between them are tolerated. It should be added that most probably neither has the subjective conscious experience of this, but their metacommunications are evidence of this assumption of equality. Each of them behave as if they knew the other intimately, because their data about the other person, in fact, comes from himself/herself. The critical point to be made about the homeostatic systemic impact of this, is that systemic symmetrical projective identification can only occur when the projectively identified with person behaves as if the projectively identified with objects are actually his/her own. For example, George obligingly behaves as if he were indeed a murderer when he begins to strangle Martha, and Martha behaves as if she were a "satanic bitch" (p. 137) by telling George's secret. (See excerpts above.)

Because the terminology has become a bit cumbersome, I shall pause to distinguish, for convenience, between person and object. In object relations literature, one speaks of projectively identifying with objects. This is a very precise statement which describes the intrapsychic events which take place. People do projectively identify with their own object representations which they have defensively (and unconsciously) located in someone else. However, for my purposes, it is important to recognize this other person as being more than either an object representation or a passive receptacle for object representation. I do not dispute nor do I wish to change the Kleinian definition of projective identification; I do, however, want to place

projective identification in its systemic context. Therefore, when I speak of the person projectively identified with, I am talking about the person who is being dealt with as if he or she contained such split-off objects, and who can in turn collude in this belief, or not collude. This collusion is not typically conscious. Whether or not this collusion takes place is of great importance systemically and that is why I make the distinction between person and object.

Collusion in projective indentification by the person projectively identified with, is a homeostatic mechanism which closes a negative feedback loop. It allows little or no change in the overall quality of the system's functioning. It also thereby feeds the information back into the system that the process of projective identification is to begin again, once a communication has ended. The dyad colluding in the projective identification have, therefore, introduced negative entropy into the communication system. They are increasing the organization of their communication, and at this level of analysis, increasing the probability of accurate prediction of future behavior. This is so, because their negative feedback loop limits the possibilities open to them in further establishing their relationship with one another. By their collusion, change, when it occurs, is a first order change--more of the same. For example, if symmetrical projective identification is being colluded in, escalation is the type of change which would occur; and conversely, with complementary projective identification, rigidification is the type of change which would occur. The systemic significance of projective identification collusion depends on the pervasiveness this process has for the system being studied. In George and Martha's as well as Nick and Honey's systems, projective

identification collusion is very significant, since it is a central feature of their respective communication systems.

One way of assessing whether or not such collusion is central to the system's functioning, is to determine what role it plays in the maintenance or elaboration of the system's basic assumption life. One can say symmetrical projective indentification is central to George and Martha's system, because without it, their virtually unchanging fight/flight basic assumption would be impossible to maintain at such a ferocious level of intensity. Other basic assumption manifestations would occur more frequently if this type of collusion were not present, and perhaps most importantly, work group function would be seen more frequently.

Systemic complementary projective identification consists of phenomena which are similar to symmetrical except that the metacommunication and communication contains the assumption that the projectively identified with person, and the person doing the projection, have constructed a complementary communicational context. Within such a context, the intrapsychic process is the same, but the systemic resonance is different. For example, Nick and Honey maintain between them a fairly rigid complementary projective identification. This is an ideal setting for basic assumption dependency to flourish. Nick is to be the all-giving all-knowing leader, while Honey is to be the always needy, always undiscerning follower. This must needs lend a different quality to the process of projective identification. The process of the enactment of this defense is the same as it is in systemic symmetrical projective identification. The difference, in part, is in the mutual selection of different objects to projectively identify with. It is

impossible within a complementary communicational context, for two persons to projectively identify with the same sorts of objects which they locate in each other. In the example of Nick and Honey, Nick projectively identifies with those objects in his intrapsychic life which for him, represent intellectual and sexual incompetency and libidinal frustration. He deals with her on this basis. She in turn, as the person projectively identified with, colludes with this view of herself, and masterfully acts out these expectations (undoubtedly in part due to her own valency for such behavior). Honey, on the other hand, projectively identifies with those objects in her intrapsychic life which for her, represent intellectual and sexual competency and libidinal gratification. She deals with Nick on this basis. He, as the person projectively identified with, ardously attempts to collude with this set of expectations, while faced by severe challenges made by George and Martha to this role.

The stark contrast between the patterns of communication found in George and Martha's dialogues and those which take place between Nick and Honey, serve well to highlight the differences in the contexts which exist systemically for their projective identifications. In the former, the stage is set for each to projectively identify with the other around the same types of aggressive, potentially lethal objects. In the latter, the communicational stage is set for Nick and Honey to projectively identify with each other around opposite types of objects. By the word "types" I am making, for heuristic purposes, a distinction between two types of object representations: Kleinian good and bad objects. I do not mean to imply that there are not other types, nor that gradient types do not exist between the two I am setting forth. In

George and Martha's systemic symmetrical projective identification, they mutually collude in splitting-off bad types of object representations and then acting out of these unconsciously held expectations. In Nick and Honey's systemic complementary projective identification, they mutually collude in splitting-off bad and good types of object representations, respectively.

As I stated earlier, pathology is defined, in systems communication terms, as an inflexibility in communication patterns, while health is defined as flexibility. I would add to this, that inflexibility in communication patterns is also evidence that basic assumption life is present in an unbridled form, while flexibility is evidence that work group processes are present. George and Martha's symmetrical projective identification is evidence of pathology systemically, because it is a negative feedback loop which maintains an inflexibility in communication patterns, and an inflexibility of continuing basic assumption fight/flight.

This means that in George and Martha's system, one can say with relatively high probability, a second order change brought about from within this system most likely would have to be initiated by an escalation which breaks down their system. The communicational oscillations would intensify to the point at which it would shake itself down. This is not to say that other things could not happen, it is just to state these other things have a lower probability of happening. This escalation in fact occurs in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Albee, 1962) in Act Three, "The Exorcism" and centers on George and Martha's imaginary son. In Albee's play, the emergence and later killing of their imaginary son is an example of basic assumption pairing and symmetrical communication.

I would like to discuss the next aspect of an integration of object relations and systems communication group theories, by identifying and describing systemic narcissism which I shall then relate to the play. I think it is useful to explore the etiology and later meaning of hope in group life, as a way of identifying the systemic emergence of narcissism.

Messianic hopes are the cornerstone of the definition of a pairing basic assumption process. Human history is replete with examples of the Messianic hope which form the foundations of what Frankl (1963) calls "man's search for meaning." Erikson (1964) notes that the earliest virtue of the human infant is hope which is developed at a benign resolution of the trust vs. mistrust stage of development. I would venture to say that this, the most developmentally basic of the Eriksonian virtues, is the energy source and motivation for all change.

Klein states (1975a, p. 75) that hope emerges during the infant's experience in the depressive position. The hope in this situation is based on what is initially an omnipotent sense of one's reparative abilities; the outgrowth of a nascent sense of responsibility is that one can set right what injuries one has caused. I would like to add to this that perhaps an even earlier form of hope can be linked with the paranoid-schizoid position. During this time, the infant idealizes the good object, thereby protecting it from the terror associated with the bad persecutory object. This allows the infant to hope, and indeed have faith, that the bad object will not overcome the good object and destroy it. During this time, the infant also sustains the hope that its desires will be gratified by a boundless ideal breast.

In adult group life, this conflict between hope and terror is not uncommon. I would suggest that in group life it leads to a systemically complementary splitting of good and bad group objects. The perceived good objects thereby attain a one-up idealized position while the bad objects are relegated to the one-down position. It is important to state again, for clarity, that the word "object" in this context does not mean "person"--the same person may at times be perceived as a good (idealized) object and at other times as a bad (devalued) object. I would suggest further, that to the degree that a group manifests these ubiquitous processes in a rigid manner, that is the degree to which the group's dynamics are marked by narcissistic pathology. Rigidity of these processes can be seen when certain objects are consistently assigned to specific people relentlessly and without regard for the process of reality testing.

Specifically, when the good and bad complementary object positions are assigned in a systemically rigid manner, the people assigned these positions are increasingly stable. The people assigned as the receptacles for idealized good objects, remain in a one-up position consistently over time, and the people assigned as receptacles for devalued bad objects, remain consistently in a one-down position communicationally. This is the hallmark of systemic narcissism. The hope resulting from systemic narcissism would be a hollow hope indeed, as it is based on a shallow and communicationally rigid role assignment.

I have mentioned that splitting in groups is ubiquitous. However, it must be borne in mind that this by itself is not a definition of health or pathology. When people in groups are, at different times, in a systemically flexible manner, in the one-up and one-down position in

terms of this complementary splitting, in a manner which is responsive to reality testing, this is evidence of systemic health. In such a system, no one is the consistent receptacle of idealized or devalued objects, and therefore, no one suffers the communicational consequences of such rigid complementarity. Hope in this context is based on perceptions which are founded on the checks and balances provided by reality testing.

In terms of the play, narcissistic conflicts center around the son myth in George and Martha's system. Each sees the son as a narcissistic extention of self in idealized form, and devalues the spouse in relation to him. For example:

> George: [. . .] A son who would not disown his father, who came to him for advice, for information, for love that wasn't mixed with sickness--and you know what I mean, Martha!--who could not tolerate the slashing, braying residue that called itself his MOTHER. MOTHER? HAH!!
>
> Martha: (Cold) All right, you. A son who was so ashamed of his father he asked me once if it--possibly--wasn't true, as he had heard, from some cruel boys, maybe, that he was not our child; who could not tolerate the shabby failure his father had become. . . .
>
> (p. 225)

This exchange takes place after Martha repeatedly idealized their son with comments that his eyes are green (like hers), that "He was tan before and after everyone . . . and in the sun his hair . . . became . . . fleece" (p. 220), and that their son was ". . . Beautiful; wise; perfect" (p. 222). Complementary splitting can be said to exist around the son myth, but in a more or less hypothetical way, since the son does not really exist to be in the one-up position communicationally.

Nick and Honey's system, complementary splitting has already been described in terms of their complementary projective identification. It can be added that systemic narcissism exists in their system, with the result that Nick is in the idealized one-up position, trying to fulfill the role of someone who must be what he cannot be--the boundless ideal source of libidinal gratification for Honey. A result of complementary splitting, then, is an intrapsychic double-bind. Nick is behaving as if he fulfilled the idealized role Honey perceived him in via her projective identification, consequently, he consistently disproves what he unconsciously believes; namely, Nick's conscious and unconscious self representations are practically opposites. Communicationally, he acts on this conflict by seeing Honey as the one who is inferior. As their complementary communication patterns are influenced by intrapsychic conflicts, these conflicts are exacerbated by their communication.

This section has illustrated and extended the integration of systems and object relations group theories begun in Chapter Three by describing the interplay between the intrapsychic and the communicational aspects of group life. I believe that pursuing such an integrated model has much to recommend it. Using only systems communication group theory, I can describe in clear terms how a system functions, maintains itself, and changes. However, I cannot explain why one group communicates in one way while another does so in a very different way. Using only object relations group theory, I can describe the intrapsychic determinants which tend to influence the individual's communication in groups. However, I cannot describe how the communication of individuals in a group influence how a system functions, maintains itself, or changes. By using an integrated model,

I have shown that the limitations of each of the theories can be minimized. I believe that in order to describe group behavior as fully as possible, it is necessary to continue the integration I have begun.

Chapter V

In this dissertation, I have attempted to make a few modest bridges between two theories of group behavior. I would like to devote a few concluding pages to expanding the issues I have raised to treat briefly the subject of Klein's definition of projective identification, relating it to societal functioning in a very general way.

Projective Identification

Because I feel that projective identification is the single most pervasive and systemically significant defense in the human psychological arsenal, I would like to briefly indulge in a review of Klein's presentation of this construct. Then I shall review the systemic ramifications of this presentation.

In Klein's paper, "On Identification" which was written in 1955, (1975b, pp. 141-175) she examines the process of projective identification from three perspectives. She looks at the relation between split-off parts to those left behind, the motives underlying the choice of objects to projectively identify with, and ". . . how far in these processes the projected part of . . .[the] self becomes submerged in the object or gains control over it" (p. 167). She uses, as a vehicle for these considerations, a novel by Julian Green (1950) in which the hero makes a pact with the Devil, through which he can repeat a magical formula which allows him to enter the body and personality of another person, who then in similar fashion enters the body and personality he inhabits.

In this intriguing review, she clarifies some issues having to do with the process of projective identification. In view of her first question, which has to do with the relation of the self to its split-off parts, she notes the sense of alienation, longing, and guilt which pervades this relationship internally. Interestingly, because she has chosen this particular novel, she takes up this issue from the perspective of the split-off parts which now concretely inhabit another person. She notes the process of looking back on the remaining depleted self and the feelings aroused by this in the projectively identified with object. The clear reification of the split-off objects in her analysis of this novel's hero is in part determined by the content of the novel itself, since the hero concretely enters the body of his projectively identified with "victim" (p. 167), and partly because of Klein's notion that this represents the internal experience of human beings. Klein states (1975b) that the part of the person which is not split off, lies ". . . dormant until the split-off aspects of his personality return, [and] represents, in my view, that component of the ego which patients unconsciously feel they have retained while other parts are projected into the external world and lost. . . . The feeling that he does not know where the parts of himself which he has dispersed into the external world have gone to, is a source of great anxiety and insecurity . . ." (p. 166). She notes that the hero, Fabian, in the body of one of his victims, ". . . experiences the urge to regain his former self . . . [and] feelings of guilt about having neglected and deserted a precious component of his personality . . ." (p. 167).

In light of her second question, which has to do with the motives underlying the choice of objects with which to projectively identify,

she carefully deliniates the themes of Fabian's infantile longings, frustrations, and gratifications. She then shows how these themes are evoked by the various people in Fabian's adult life and serve as the basis of his choices with whom to projectively identify. She specifies that the most important element in this selection is the perception of "common characteristics" (p. 168) between Fabian and his projectively identified with objects. She also notes that introjection of characteristics of the projectively identified object, occur at the same time as the projective identification. One of these processes, and the issues attached to them, however, becomes dominant at any given time, while the other recedes.

Klein then seeks to explain the submergence of the projected objects in the projectively identified with object to distinguish this from the domination which the split-off parts can exert over the projectively identified with object. In essence, she puts forth the hypothesis that the degree to which one looses oneself in the projectively identified with object indicates the degree to which the ego is weakened. Conversely, she states that the reunification of the split-off objects with the self occurs when the good self objects are discovered and the ego is thereby able to identify with them. She adds that this reunification is ". . . bound up with a growing capacity to love. This corresponds to Freud's theory of synthesis as a function of the libido--ultimately of the life instinct" (p. 173).

In all three of the questions Klein answers in this paper, there are important issues which she does not directly address. For instance, she notes that Fabian's first choice of someone to enter refuses his request. Now, this poses several interesting questions. Most

importantly, it indicates that co-operation is necessary for projective identification. What kind of co-operation is a more subtle issue. Each subsequent exchange of abodes for Fabian's split-off parts hinges on the use of a magical formula which is used without the knowledge, much less, the permission of his victim. Yet, there is what I would still call co-operation; it is a co-operation based on what the author, via poetic license, denotes as "magic" and what the psychoanalytic theorist would denote as unconscious process. Because it is based on unconscious processes, one further distinction must be made following Bion's theory, and that is what he calls valency. Valency is different from co-operation primarily in that it is a spontaneous event which is unpremeditated and governed by unconscious processes; it results in what he calls basic assumption processes rather than work group processes. This then adds to Klein's notions that in order for projective identification to occur, the recipient of the split-off parts must have a valency for those part objects which is based on the common characteristics held by the two participants. However, the "victim" is, in a sense, duped because the person who is doing the projective identifying refuses to take responsbility for the split-off parts, and is thereby short changed himself because he has depleted and lost part of his self.

It is at this point in a theoretical discussion of projective identification that the systemic aspects of the process become evident. In the introduction to Chapter Two of this dissertation, I raised the issue of responsibility in group behavior and in Chapter Four, discussed the disowning of responsibility by the person doing the projective identification as it happened between George and Martha. I would like to add one dimension to the above.

In reading Klein's paper with a systems communication perspective, I feel it becomes clear that the person projectively identified with begins living in the middle of a pragmatic paradox the moment he/she colludes with the other person or persons's defense. I briefly outlined this phenomenon at the end of Chapter Four (above) in describing Nick's double-bind in trying to carry out Honey's complementary projective identification. I have chosen dyadic groups for examples in this dissertation because the data, although complex, is much more manageable than larger groups. However, I feel it is essential to suggest in this conclusion, that I suspect that the power of systemic projective identification in larger groups increases in geometric proportion to the size of the groups in a system which participates in this defense.

Intrapsychic defenses which are brought into play in group life can only be surmised by the communicational behavior which occurs in a group. I feel that these defenses form an internal system which is based or founded on homeostatic mechanisms which can be found in the group system. Social and cultural norms are examples of such group systemic homeostatic mechanisms. Human beings tend to organize their behavior around a miriad of beliefs and assumptions they have in common. These beliefs can be relatively uncontroversial and not laden by value judgments or quite controversial and very value charged. These latter tend to be surrounded by an aura of irrationality. The common belief that women bear children and men cannot is not likely to stir passionate responses in a large proportion of the world's population; however, the belief that certain subgroups of the world's population are genetically, behaviorally, politically, or morally inferior to other subgroups will most certainly stir passions of epic dimensions. In

recent centuries, countless wars of varying magnitudes of destructiveness have been waged over precisely such issues of irrationality.

I cannot help but wonder how much of the world's misery (in humanitarian terms), psychopathology (in psychological terms), or sinfulness (in religious terms) can be traced back to some significant degree to systemic projective identification. Although the overly simplistic translations I just made may be unpardonable, I am left with the distinct impression that the humanists, psychologists, and great religious thinkers have all provided the world with reasonable answers aimed at the resolution of the difficulties posed by systemic projective identification. Whether it has been put in terms like "where id was there ego shall be" or "do not unto others as you would not have them do unto you" the world has not been swift in taking heed. One aspect of what I am emphasizing in this review and elaboration of Klein, is the importance of addressing the issue of free will in group behavior studies. The most elaborated point I have made in this conclusion, is that the significant features of small group life which I have described, by using an integrated model of group theory, can be used to describe societal phenomena also.

Summary

I shall end this conclusion by briefly restating the major findings of this dissertation. In working toward integrating object relations and systems communication group theories, I found that basic assumption life (Bion, 1968) and communicational schismogenesis as presented by Watzlawick, et al. (1967) were associated. I found that basic assumption processes are associated with rigid complementarity and escalated symmetry. I also found that fight/flight and symmetrical

communication are linked, as are dependency and complementary communication. I also linked what I named non-relational communication with pairing basic assumption. I identified these processes as they occurred around the essential interactions of each basic assumption.

I have also spoken of intrapsychic defenses as systemic homeostatic mechanisms. I identified and elaborated what I called symmetrical projective identification and complementary projective identification. I also discussed complementary splitting and systemic narcissism. In the conclusion, I spoke of the possibilities of using an integrated perspective on group life to study societal behavior.

The integrated model I have suggested in this dissertation provides a stronger theoretical base for understanding group behavior than either object relations or systems communication group theories do individually.

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