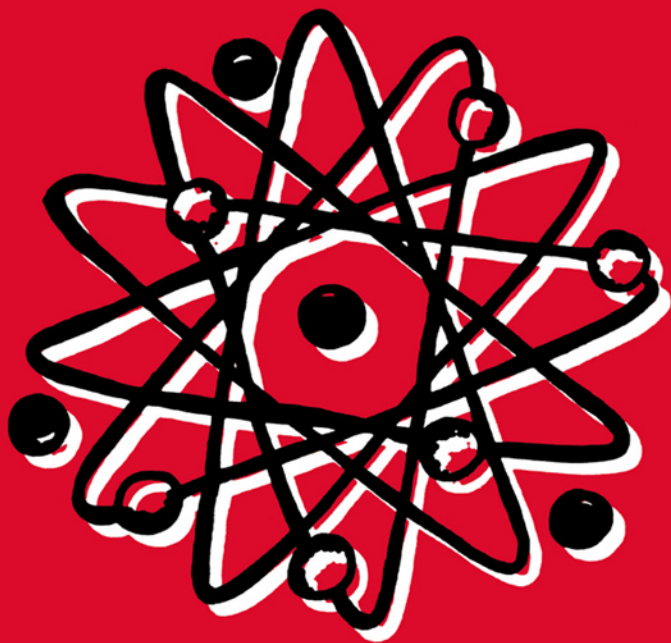


Object Relations, the Self, and the Group



CHARLES ASHBACH
and VICTOR L. SCHERMER



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Object relations, the self, and the group

This work presents a framework for integrating group psychology theories of object relations, the ego, and the self. The authors review earlier work and explore the similarities and differences between individual depth psychology and group dynamics. They call for a new epistemology and paradigm shift from the separateness of the individual and the group to their continuity, interaction and complementarity. General Systems Theory is the perspective recommended for understanding the individual to group linkage.

Ashbach and Schermer see the principles of psychological space and of boundary shifts among hierarchical levels of the group matrix as bridging constructs between the individual and group dynamics. They emphasize the application of such constructs to group training, psychotherapy and development, and examine the nature of myth and symbol as both internal and social processes. A research investigation of group interaction is provided as an example of a quantitative study of object relations/self dimensions in group process.

In addition to providing its own theoretical and practical perspectives, *Object Relations, the Self, and the Group* will be useful as a text for courses in group dynamics, group therapy, object relations theory, and ego and self psychologies. Key constructs in each of these fields are defined and discussed in relation to one another, and practical examples are provided.

Charles Ashbach is a psychotherapist in private practice in Philadelphia, USA. **Victor L. Schermer** is a clinical psychologist in Philadelphia. He is Executive Director of the Study Group for Contemporary Psychoanalytic Process and Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Conflict.

The International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process

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The International Library of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process is published in association with the Institute of Group Analysis (London) and is devoted to the systematic study and exploration of group psychotherapy.

The contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology, which at first glance may seem to be full of significance, loses a good deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely.

Sigmund Freud

*Group Psychology and the
Analysis of the Ego (1921, p. 1)*

Object relations, the self, and the group

A conceptual paradigm

Charles Ashbach and Victor L.Schermer

Foreword by James S.Grotstein, M.D.



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Contents

Foreword	vii
<i>James S. Grotstein, M.D.</i>	
Preface to the paperback edition	xii
Acknowledgements	xv
A note to the reader	xvii
<i>Part 1 Elements of a paradigm</i>	1
1 Introduction and overview	3
2 Towards a paradigm and epistemology for psychoanalytic group psychology	9
<i>Part 2 Object relations and the self: from intrapsychic to interactive constructs</i>	33
3 Object relations theory	35
4 Ego, self, and identification	73
<i>Part 3 Systems theory, developmental psychology, and the group</i>	103
5 The group as an object relations system and representation	105
6 The group analytic grid and the three systems: individual, interaction, group- <i>qua</i> -group	129
7 Developmental group psychology	161
<i>Part 4 Special topics</i>	177
8 The ‘fourfold way’ of group transference	179

9	Group evolution	187
10	On myth, symbol, and fantasy formation	209
11	Group psychotherapy: some aspects of multiple systems	233
12	Self-object differentiation: ‘act by act’ analysis of large group interaction	253
	Appendix The group analytic grid	279
	Bibliography	287
	Index	307

Foreword

James S. Grotstein, M.D.

With the exception of a few, meager, though incredibly profound and prescient papers on group psychology by Freud, Bion, and a handful of other analysts, psychoanalysis seems to have become a psychology of individuals independent of the group, though affected by the group. Group psychology *per se* has failed, in the main, to attract the attention of psychoanalysis, as shown by the fact that, in the last thirty years there has been only one panel on groups in the semi-annual meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association.

The recent contributions of Kohut and his followers in self psychology have serendipitously brought to life the hitherto unsuspected paradox that classical analysis, with its emphasis on infantile sexuality, the autoerotic zones, the Oedipus complex, the developmental phases of autism, symbiosis, and separation-individuation, was all along a group psychology, one where analytic theory shepherded the infant from its autistic cauld into the progressive stages, zones, modes, modalities, and techniques of relating to ever-changing images of their nurturing objects. Kohut unwittingly revealed this paradox by bifurcating individual development into two separate components, one being the development of the self as a participant in the Oedipal phase, with the parental objects. Object relations theory, whether of the British school or its American counterpart, was quick to realize that whatever the status of the drives, the infant really is searching for a mother, not only, now, to discharge his/her instinctual tensions, but to relate to, to get reassurance and warmth from, to be given meaning by, to be cared for by those auxiliary functions still residing in mother and father, such

functions as soothing and stimulation, which ultimately will become the legacy of the properly developing infant.

Until Kohut and others made these postulations, psychoanalysis had been dependent, as stated above, largely on Freud's and Bion's contributions to group psychology. Freud held that the group may act in a way which is analogous to the psychology of an individual, and its component members characteristically project their own egos, as well as ego ideals, onto the group leader, thereby creating a state of idealization and idealized expectation of the latter. Bion formulated the concept of the container and the contained, as a basic paradigm for all individuals, groups, and cultures. It was a refinement of Kleinian psychology and a notion borrowed from cognitive psychology, which postulated a matrix relationship between figure and ground, where the latter frames and defines the former. The group is the container which must absorb, direct, plan for, and withstand, the impact of the vitality of the individual; yet, at the same time, the group establishment must plan for the future of its members, and therefore must anticipate the Messiah, or the 'Messiah thought,' process it by challenging it, and/or welcoming it. Also, characteristically, groups convene to do work in a single-focused way, but are interrupted or undermined by resistances in subgroups, which can be understood not too dissimilarly to individual psychology, according to Bion. Yet it is important to realize that both Freud and Bion postulate that the individual in the group is no longer merely an individual, but is now a 'group individual' and therefore operates by psychological forces and directives which, though intrapsychic from one point of view, find their origin in the more mysterious lair of group psychology atmospherics.

Freud and Bion devised their concepts of group psychology from the discovery of the internal object. Long before brain laterality studies by neuropsychologists established the duality of normal consciousness and, as a consequence, the presence of alter egos within a single self, Freud first, and Klein and Fairbairn later, established that the infant, in having a narcissistic relationship to his/her objects, treats (a) the object as part of the self and (b) the self as part of the object. As a consequence of projective and introjective identification, the amalgamized objects ('selfobjects') are internalized in the ego and superego in variegated ways so as

to secure the basis for an internal subculture of selves conducting 'conversations' and relationships of great labyrinthine complexity which nevertheless seem to bear a correspondence to their counterparts in the external world, thereby verifying Hermes Trismegistus, the ancient philosopher, who stated, 'As above, so below.'

Kohut's second emphasis, that of empathic or introspective observation of the patient, as opposed to detached observation (experience-near as opposed to experience-distant) became a second departure from which perspective one could now glean that classical analysis was yet again more a group psychology than not. If empathic observation is the mirroring of the patient's experiences so as to affirm, validate, or notarize them from the empathic point of view, then challenges to the patient by the analyst, such as confrontations and 'reflective' (as opposed to 'mirroring') interpretations, remind the patient, as they reminded his/her predecessor, the infant, that (s)he is a member of a group from the very beginning—where the first group is that of the infant and its mother, the second group that of the infant with mother and father, then with siblings, etc. Thus, from many different standpoints, it became obvious retrospectively that classical analysis was the study of how that benign savage, the infant, had to accomodate and adjust to civilized culture and indoctrinate him/herself into its laws, mores, practices, and language.

Lacan puts it well when he states that the infant loses his/her innocence as (s)he descends into the symbolic order in the name of the father. We now have two different group psychologies based upon individual psychology, that in which the infant is in an intimate inter-subjective fusion with the maternal object and protected *from other group interaction*, and a second group formation, in which the infant is released and weaned into group participation. Thus we can see a dual track between bonding with a primal group and weaning into a more nearly permanent group. Further, we can see a dual track in the experience of the individual alone, in his own right, and also as an intimate, participating member of a group with which he feels an identification or a bond.

Systems theory, as postulated by von Bertalanffy, postulates that all biological entities can be thought of as comprised of systems

with feed-back and feed-forward inputs so as to adjust and to maintain the homeostasis of all systems. A pathological system may develop in a family or a group which might be a myth, an untruth, a sacred belief, etc., which is held in high esteem and believed by all members of the group, thereby constituting a 'system' in order to maintain the integrity and unity of the group. 'Psychoanalysis must be practiced only by physicians' would be the system employed, for instance, by the American Psychoanalytic Association, to maintain the unity and integrity of its establishment continuity.

From the Cartesian point of view, systems can be thought of as entities observable from a distance by any observer trained in the same technique to observe them. A dialectical counterpart to the Cartesian mind/body dualism would be *autopoiesis*, as formulated by Maturana and Varela, which sees all elements of biological life, from the unicellular to the mega-cultural or cosmic, as vital, unknowable entities having their own inscrutable laws and lending themselves only to observation and imputation by the observer, the latter of whom imputes 'cognition' to them, but the exact nature of this cognition is never knowable. We thus see a dualistic (observing self versus observed object) theory of a group as a dialectical contrast to the holistic and holographic notion of the group as a complex, self-governing entity which does not lend itself to Cartesian dissection.

How and why groups function is the task of social psychology and group psychology to divine. Human beings seem to be gregarious and seek group networks in order to mitigate individual weaknesses and to borrow of the strength of the group network for higher order protection and gain. It is the 'side effects' of grouping which have called themselves to history's attention across the long corridors of time, whether it be war against an 'inferior' group, or a predator group—or whether it is the need to find, within the group or outside it, some delegate of human anguish or misery who is to be selected to be the human sacrifice. We must allow the Oedipus complex to emerge from the tight strictures of the legendary Oedipus' putative incestuous and patricidal impulses (as an individual with an unconscious mental life) and demonstrate its relevance for groups as well. Yes, groups, like individuals, appear to have an Oedipal complex, and the selecting of a Messiah and of a human sacrifice seems to be its

deeper function, as was the case with Oedipus himself and/or with Christ, or compositely, as in the case of the Holocaust. Time is wasting, and groups are choosing. We all hope that this book will help the group pause before it selects again.

Beverly Hills, California

Preface to the paperback edition

It has been seven years since the original publication in 1987 of *Object Relations, the Self, and the Group*, and the printing now of a paperback edition gives both the authors and readers an opportunity to appraise how well it has stood this brief test of time. Developments in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy have moved along at a rapid pace, adjusting to advances in knowledge as well as the exigencies of changes in the health care system and the rich international exchange of information and ideas that has occurred in recent years. Is *Object Relations, the Self, and the Group* still current and contemporary? If the authors were rewriting it today, what changes might they make?

When published in 1987, the book was, for the most part, highly praised, and it created a small stir in group dynamics and group therapy circles. Members of the Group Analytic Institute faculties in Europe found the book innovative and scholarly and used it as a teaching text. Book reviewers in the US praised the book's comprehensive, in-depth understanding of psychodynamic, group psychology, and the book was regarded as 'state of the art' in that respect. Systems theorists such as Jim Durkin and Larry Gould considered the book to be a genuine breakthrough in integrating object relations theory and systems approaches. The work seemed to succeed in its goal: to explore and update a range of inter-relationships between individual and group psychology with object relations theory and self psychology as a foundation.

In the seven years that have passed, there have been significant advances in psychoanalysis and group therapy, and also some 'old wine in new bottles'. Colleagues will disagree with us and amongst each other as to what is real change and what is simply a rephrasing of what has come before. There follows a summary of our

view, which may serve as a brief guide for the reader in bringing the book up to date.

There have been several major and related shifts in thinking which are especially relevant to this volume. One is the study of infant psychology and mother-infant pairs; for example, the work of Daniel Stern and of T. Berry Brazelton and their associates and students. Their research endeavours affirm the crucial nature of *interaction* from the very beginning of life, as object relations theorists such as Winnicott and Fairbairn had inferred many years before. In addition, the infant studies lend some support to the psychoanalytic paradigm shift urged by Stephen Mitchell, i.e. towards an interpersonal rather than 'instinct' or drive theory of development. *Object Relations, the Self, and the Group* took a conservative position on the drive theory, criticizing it in some respects but recognizing its virtues as well. In particular, it is as yet difficult to see how Mitchell's position would incorporate the profound significance of primitive phantasy and internalized object relations without positing some 'wired in' urges or predispositions. We would still, even today, urge caution about 'throwing out the baby (of self regulation and internal predispositions) with the bathwater (of an outdated "closed systems" view of the organism)'.

A second important shift in thinking relates to Atwood and Stolorow's important work on 'intersubjectivity' in the psychoanalytic session, which by extension would apply to the group setting as well. Intersubjectivity may be thought of as the subjective, phenomenological component of the 'objectively observed' interactions, dialogue, matrices and systems that are established when human beings 'relate' to one another in a dyadic, triangular or group-qua-group context. If we were rewriting this book today, we would doubtless include intersubjectivity as a significant mode of understanding relationships and mental process in groups.

Self psychology has continued to develop and expand as a school of thought of its own as well as in tandem with object relations theory. Lichtenberg and others have helped to integrate self psychology and infant research, considerably enlarging the scope of self psychology. The understanding of so-called 'self-object transference' has gone beyond the original mirror and idealizing transferences to include a variety of self-object functions from merger to soothing to 'adversarial' or assertive states. In addition,

self psychology has recently been applied to the understanding of borderline and psychotic states.

Finally, there are two developments within object relations theory which should be highlighted. One is the British Independent School as it has evolved with the work of Bollas, Kohon, Casement and others. Their work highlights the interpersonal matrix of psychotherapy, as well as the countertransference, and also gives a contemporary flavour to some of the work of Melanie Klein, Winnicott and the other pioneers of object relations theory. In addition, the contributions of W.R.Bion have taken on increasing significance in many parts of the world, and Bion's understanding of psychosis, thought disorder and catastrophic change would most certainly receive more elaboration by us.

On the whole, though, the book seems remarkably up to date to the authors, who must admit their narcissistic investment in it! The reader will, of course, be the final arbiter of this matter.

All of our lives, our cultures, and our planet have changed in many ways over the past several years. Given some of the world crises that have occurred, we can only echo what Jim Grotstein said in the Foreword: 'We all hope this book will help the group pause before it selects again'. However, we can also take heart that groups do make healthy choices. For example, Routledge has put the likes of Malcolm Pines, series editor, Edwina Welham, general editor, and Jennifer Binnie and Ann Grindrod, desk editors, at our disposal in arranging and preparing the paperback edition, and, for that and our current support team in the United States, we are very grateful.

Charles Ashbach and Victor L. Schermer
Philadelphia, PA

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Finally, this work must ultimately be dedicated to psychotherapy patients and participants in training and laboratory groups, the great teachers of the nature of the unconscious and of human

relations, who through their pain, insight, and progress have contributed to any enlightenment to which this volume can lay claim.

A note to the reader

Two overlapping ‘audiences’ are addressed in this book: psychoanalytic psychotherapists and group psychologists. The mood, it is hoped, is one of reconciliation, and the structure of the text is designed to meet the needs of both disciplines.

This work is in four parts. [Part 1](#) consists of a statement and philosophy of the paradigm. [Part 2](#) is a selective review of object relations theory and self psychology with special attention to group dynamics. The novice will find this section useful as an introduction, while those who are more knowledgeable may use it as a review and also to inform themselves of the authors’ position on basic issues. [Part 3](#) presents a conceptual framework and a ‘Group Analytic Grid’ for making observations and inferences about groups. [Part 4](#) is a set of independent essays on selected topics. Chapters [9](#) and [11](#) on group evolution and psychotherapy respectively were contributed by Victor Schermer, while Chapters [10](#) and [12](#) on mythology and ‘act by act’ research with the large group are the work of Charles Ashbach. An Appendix provides a matrix presentation of the ‘Group Analytic Grid’ which summarizes in chart form many of the concepts discussed throughout and to which the reader should refer as (s)he reads the text.

It is hoped that this structure will facilitate the use of the text in classroom and supervisory contexts.

Part 1

Elements of a paradigm

The great extension of our experience in recent years has brought to light the insufficiency of our simple mechanical conceptions and, as a consequence, has shaken the foundation on which the customary interpretation of observation was based.

Neils Bohr

*Atomic Physics and the Description
of Nature* (1958, p. 2)

Chapter 1

Introduction and overview

This monograph introduces a paradigm for the understanding of group phenomena based upon the development of object relations, the self, and the ego. From this perspective, groups, in their evolution, embody and recapitulate the symbiosis/separation-individuation process (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975). The child's inner life and interaction with the environment are repeated in groups and form a conceptual model for a process in which the group forms a cohesive entity, defines boundary conditions and roles, and copes with issues of power, task, and intimacy. Such a view is complementary to the Oedipal perspective (Freud, 1913, 1921) in which group dynamics are seen predominantly as a function of the members' transference to the leader as a 'father-figure' and totem object.

In the newer paradigm (Kuhn, 1970), group life develops as an ambivalent movement towards separation-individuation, achieved through internalization and externalization as defensive and adaptive maneuvers, the management of anxieties related to fragmentation, object loss, and the diminution of ego boundaries, and the need to preserve and modulate narcissism and self esteem. It may be said that groups exhibit three predominant levels of social organization reflecting conditions of psychic integration: part-object pre-Oedipal, Oedipal and object-constant, and mature self reflection and self criticism.

The paradigm further defines the way in which psychoanalytic object relations theory and self psychology illuminate the group entity and vice-versa. Individual mentation and group activity are points along a continuum. *Object relations theory asserts that mentation is established in interaction with significant others, so that to think and to experience is also to participate in*

a transactional situation. Psychoanalytic developmental psychology has progressed from the 'closed system' libido theory to 'open system' concepts which relate the interactive and the intrapsychic. Such 'interactive constructs' (Schermer, 1980b) include projective identification (Melanie Klein, 1975), the transitional space (Winnicott, 1955), the merged selfobject (Kohut, 1971) and symbiosis. These terms refer to the interface between the mental and the interpersonal in which intrapsychic and group structure, process, and content emerge from an 'undifferentiated matrix' (Hartmann, 1958), the bio-social equipment of the infant-person in the context of his beginning social interaction.

A brief review of the thread in group science which leads up to the present discussion, and emphasizing the contributions of Freud and Bion, will orient the reader to the origins of such a paradigm for group relations.

Origins of the paradigm

Psychoanalysis has, from its inception, been concerned with the family and group situations. In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) Freud hypothesized a 'natural continuity' between the dynamics of the individual and those of groups and advanced a theory to explain 'the psychology of groups on the basis of changes in the psychology of the individual mind' (p. x). Freud's intrapsychic model of group phenomena focused primarily on processes of identification and libidinal attachments, and also on the then newly introduced concept of tripartite structure, id, ego, and superego (including the ego ideal). Freud viewed identification with the leader as the motive force of group life and saw two mechanisms operating: (1) identification of the members' ego with an object, and (2) replacement of the ego ideal by an object. In the former, ambivalence towards the leader results in an identification with him, his values, behavior, etc. In the latter, a more primitive narcissistic relationship is formed in which aspects of the ego ideal are projected onto the leader, attributed to him, and reintrojected.

Here may be seen two bases of group behavior, one as a recapitulation of the Oedipal situation, seen in the group context as the totemic overthrow of the leader and the incorporation of his ideals; another, expressing narcissistic and other pre-Oedipal concerns in which the group as a maternal environment is cathected as part of the self and yet at the same time facilitates that dawning

awareness of a world beyond the self which is necessary for social ties to exist.

Freud commented on the preservation of narcissistic cathexes with respect to the problem of how each member could maintain a feeling of special importance in the eyes of the leader under conditions where it is contradicted by the reality of the presence of other group members. He exemplified these dynamics in two social institutions: the Army and the Church.

In 'Totem and Taboo' (1913) Freud, however, had earlier asserted the centrality of the Oedipal conflict in group development, comparing the group to the struggle between the father and the primal horde, and emphasizing incestuous and rivalrous impulses among the members as displacements from the unconscious murder-guilt theme in the group's attitude towards the leader. Bennis and Shepard (1956) as well as Slater (1966) have utilized this model to account for the characteristic development of training groups from a leader-centered to an inter-member orientation. Slater, however, pointed out the limits of the model, especially its lack of attention to the role played by female members, and Bennis (1961) suggested that 'depressive anxieties' appeared in groups and facilitated role differentiation.

Bion (1959) extended Freud's lines of investigation of the group but, emphasizing the work of Melanie Klein on object relations, utilized formulations of primitive dynamics, the paranoid-schizoid position, and psychotic anxieties to portray the foundation of group culture: the basic assumption states of dependency, fight/flight, and pairing. He indicated (pp. 188-9) that

it is not simply a matter of the incompleteness of the illumination provided by Freud's discovery of the family group as the prototype of all groups, but the fact that this incompleteness *leaves out the source of the main emotional drives in a group* [emphasis added].... In fact, I consider... primitive anxieties of part-object relationships...to contain the ultimate sources of all group behavior.

Bion facilitated the transition from Freud's individualistic orientation to an examination of unconscious group process *per se*. He added valuable considerations on group-level interpretations, group regression, anxiety and defense, and phantasy and role formation to the repertoire of the group

psychologist. In contrast to Freud's Oedipal-familial model, Bion saw the prototype of group existence in the relationship of the infant to the mother's breast. Entry into a group, in his view, recreates the helplessness, the tendency toward fragmentation, the overwhelming impulses, and the condition of need experienced in the first months of life.

A precipitate of Bion's work has been to regard the group as an evolving 'maternal entity,' a container for projective identifications which evolves higher forms of organization corresponding to the process of separation-individuation and the establishment of individual and group identity. Following upon the work of Bion, a fresh approach to groups evolved whose premises may be summarized in the following points:

- 1 The group takes on the qualities of the maternal object ('*in locus maternis*', Slavson, 1956) evolving from part-object relations to object constancy and the 'work group' (Ashbach and Schermer, 1978).
- 2 The group regresses to various levels of development as a function of its task, the leader's position and interventions, and the balance of social forces affecting differentiation and structuralization.
- 3 Anxieties and defenses characteristic of the earliest years of life are commonly evoked in groups, and are to be regarded as a property of groups rather than just a manifestation of individual characterology (Bennis, 1961; F.Fornari, 1966; Gibbard, Hartman, and Mann, 1974).
- 4 Changes in group structure reflect changes in affects, ego boundaries and the predominant mode of object relations of the members.
- 5 Group fantasy, myth, and ritual are simultaneously ways in which the membership defends itself against primitive anxieties and adaptive vehicles for the evolving group culture (Hartman and Gibbard, 1974).
- 6 The group leader or therapist is subjected to particular countertransference pressures centered around group issues as well as individual transferences. In particular, massive projective identifications into the leader and the struggle for separation from him present special problems which test the limits of his neutrality, empathy and forbearance.

These premises form the basis for an analysis of groups which derives from the landmark work of Freud and Bion but proceeds beyond them. It is clear that what has evolved since their work is a *field and systems framework for investigating unconscious and primitive group dynamics*. Certainly, contained within this framework are important and seminal clinical and educational insights and quite promising theoretical ‘leads’ and perspectives. The position of the present work is that, in addition, a new scientific paradigm has emerged, a special set of theoretical assumptions, and, still more deeply, an epistemology or theory of knowledge concerning the relationship between the person and the social context. Where in the past there had been two more or less separate domains of individual depth psychology, on the one hand, and dynamic group psychology on the other, it appears increasingly that psychodynamics and group dynamics are interlocking systems which possess an underlying unity. Such a unified perspective implies literally new ways of observing groups and theorizing about them. This monograph attempts to take the step of articulating some of the fundamental assumptions of a paradigm which would represent the unity of the psychoanalytic investigations of the unconscious with the field theoretical, contextual, and sociocultural study of the group matrix.

Chapter 2

Towards a paradigm and epistemology for psychoanalytic group psychology

What follows is a paradigm for linking object relations and self psychology with group psychology in a systems interactive view of individual and group process. Here, some epistemological and conceptual premises are stated as a basis for further principles and practice.

Kuhn (1970, p. 175), reviewing his groundbreaking work on the philosophy and history of science, notes that,

the term paradigm is used in two different senses. On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.

‘Normal science’ is for Kuhn the accepted theory and practice in a particular field at a particular time. For example, the notion of discrete particles possessing momentum is part of the normal science of Newtonian mechanics, while in quantum mechanics, particles are replaced by ‘quanta’ of vague dimension and location, having properties of both matter and energy, particles and waves. It took a ‘crisis’ in physics which precipitated a ‘scientific revolution’ (Kuhn’s terms) to achieve acceptance of the new point of view. Similarly, psychoanalysis created a change in psychology and psychiatry by postulating unconscious motivation for behaviors and symptoms previously considered random or consciously intended. In group psychology, the concept of a dynamic field and matrix established the study of collective behavior and mentation as group-

wide patterns rather than an aggregate of social 'units'. Today, group dynamics is 'normal science'. It has its own terminology, theoretical formulations, and research efforts which differ from the study of individual dynamics.

For Kuhn, scientific truth is based not on data alone, but on a frame of reference, part of which cannot be stated explicitly but which contextually informs the perceptions and activities of scientists. Polanyi calls the implicit factor 'tacit knowing' (Gelwick, 1977, pp. 57-82) and maintains that, although it can never be fully articulated, it is as crucial to scientific investigation as the facts and laws themselves. He says, 'We know more than we can tell.' Theories depict only the surface of what one has experienced and observed. In psychoanalysis, 'tacit knowing' is present in the productive elements of the analyst's countertransference and his skill in making interpretations. In group work, the consultant's intuitive awareness of a group event, phase, or culture often likewise precedes its conceptual definition.

Problematically, the very same frame of reference which allows knowledge to be accumulated can act as a resistance to change. Kuhn (pp. 62-5) points out that, while a 'normal' paradigm is necessary and useful in working out problems and investigations which derive from its explicit and implicit premises, it can obscure and edit out the anomalies, that is, the dissonant information that emerges. That is what has happened in the relationship between psychoanalysis and group psychology.

Historically, psychoanalysis was conceived as the study of the inner life of the individual. Data which suggested that the deep unconscious is inseparable from human interaction was often excluded from its purview on the assumption that the mental life is determined within the 'somatic core'. Group life was considered secondary to and derivative of impulse discharge and tension reduction. The impact of the analyst on the patient's transference and the richness of the newborn's interaction with the social environment are but two of the empirical findings which, until recently, have been systematically excluded and considered secondary to the inner core of the personality. The mental life was altogether interiorized, creating an impression of a closed 'intra-dermal' system (de Mare, 1972, p. 101).

In this respect, Amacher (1965) has suggested in an historical assessment that Freud's metapsychological assumptions derived from the anti-vitalist, reductionist 'pledge' of the

physiologists Brucke and du Bois-Reymond (p. 10). Brucke was Freud's mentor in medical research and advocated an explanation of all neurological events in terms of physical and chemical laws, which for Freud became the drives or instincts. Freud, who admired Brucke, maintained this stance throughout his theorizing. The neurological theory of the time consisted in a type of reflexology which implied a stimulus-response psychology. One wonders what Freud's psychological theory might have looked like had he been exposed to the much later neurological gestalt field theory of Merleau-Ponty (1964) or the more complex holographic theory of Pribram (1969). These latter viewpoints imply that the nervous system (hence the mental life) functions as an integrated whole and is one with the environment.

Finally, Amacher documented how Freud borrowed from Meynert, who advocated that every action of the nervous system had a specific energy, allowing Freud to explain dreams and perceptions in terms of inner and outer stimulation (p. 24). In retrospect one can see that Meynert confused energy (or quantities of excitation) with information processing. Freud's theory was thrown out of synchrony with the nervous system by this assumption. The point of reviewing these historical findings is to suggest that Freud adopted a 'closed system' neurology and psychology which systematically reduced and excluded the primary organizing impact of the social environment on the mental life and vice-versa (even though he always recognized it clinically!).

Group dynamicists have on the whole unfortunately agreed with psychoanalysts' perceptions of themselves as investigating the singleton, or perhaps the dyad, but certainly not the life of the group. Thus, the group psychologist, regarding psychoanalytic data as individualistic, was not to be concerned with the idiosyncracies and interiors of personalities, but rather with the social life as either behavior or phenomenological field. As a consequence, the unredoubtable experience of group practitioners that groups are organized and motivated by primary process thinking and regression has been poorly assimilated into group theory itself. The universality of deep, repressed and split-off factors in group formation and evolution became an object of selective inattention to the consultant or the therapist whose orientation directed him to the here-and-now aspects of group communication. Yet in truth there is no group dynamic which does not resonate with the deep structures of thought and feeling and identity, forged historically, of both the

sender and receiver of the message. (Dynamically and countertransferentially, the observer who insists on a split between the inner world and the life of the group is defending against the continuity of his self with that of others.)

Even today, psychoanalysis and group psychology maintain assumptions and methods of observation which, to a degree, render each other paradoxical and anomalous. 'The group in depth' becomes too often a science of *ad hoc* borrowings from the analyst's couch or the social psychologist's experiments rather than an integrated field of investigation. For this reason, a third paradigm is called for, one which integrates key elements of both psychoanalysis and group dynamics but is not bound to the assumptions and prejudices of either, taking only what is useful to create itself anew. The paradigm has many sources and tributaries, some of which will now be highlighted.

Conceptual origins and issues

Object relations theory, which evolved primarily in Great Britain beginning with the work of Melanie Klein, took the first promising steps towards a psychoanalysis that was equally concerned with the depth unconscious and the environmental context. A corresponding group development, also from Great Britain, was Foulkes' group-analytic psychotherapy (1948), an approach which held the individual and the group to be in a reciprocal 'figure-ground' relationship. Ezriel (1950), Bion, and Sutherland (1952) each made major contributions towards synthesizing object relations theory and group dynamics. These were followed up with in-depth analyses of group dynamics in a number of sectors, including, for example, leadership and organizational relations, group climate, and aggression between subgroups (cf. Gibbard, Hartman, and Mann, 1974; Colman and Bexton, 1975).

The American approach has been more eclectic and diverse than the British. The work of Wolf and Schwartz (1962), Slavson (1979), and others has been devoted to developing a practical framework for the conduct of psychoanalytic group psychotherapy. Scheidlinger (1952) and Helen Durkin (1964) sought to use basic Freudian formulations to bring together the budding insights of group dynamicists with psychoanalytic theory and practice. Whitaker and Lieberman (1964), utilizing Lewinian field constructs, evolved a 'group focal conflict' model for group

treatment based on ego psychology and the structural model of psychoanalysis. Schutz (1958), Bennis and Shepard (1956), and others advanced theories of group development with a psychoanalytic base, initiating the study of group phases and the forces promoting maturation of the group and its members.

Problematic in these profoundly insightful viewpoints is the lack of a common language whereby different theories could be compared and unified. To take one but instance, Schutz called his first phase of development 'inclusion' while Bennis and Shepard labelled theirs 'dependence-submission', and it is difficult to tell whether these terms refer to the same stage of early group bonding, or whether the groups they observed exhibited different conditions and a different pattern of evolution. The lack of a unified terminology with clear observational referents is an unusual state of affairs for people concerned with communication and can only reflect the absence of a paradigm. Indeed, numerous theories of group development have been published and reviewed (cf. [chapter 9](#), this work), each with its own terminology, a condition resulting from variation among groups and their membership as well as the schools of thought underlying each theory. From the standpoint of Kuhn, a proliferation of theories indicates that a discipline is pre-paradigmatic, that it has not arrived at a unified structure. Such was the case in physics before Newton and in the theory of the unconscious prior to Freud. Prior to a paradigm, 'theories' are actually 'free-floating' amalgams of data, philosophy, and common sense. The paradigm provides a consistent structure, but only time will attest to its validity.

The pre-paradigmatic vocabulary confusion and interdisciplinary problems reflect, however, a deeper epistemological dilemma. The individual and the group have over time become reified entities, 'things' compartmentalized into separate areas of investigation, thereby disguising the underlying unity of the processes of human interaction. The resulting need for a reconceptualization of the two disciplines of individual and group psychology into an integrated point of view has been discussed by Pines (1980a) and succinctly expressed by him (1983, p. 155) as follows:

There is a creative tension in the struggle to bring together, and, if possible, to synthesize and then create a new level of theory, one that may encompass both psychoanalysis and group analysis.

It is difficult to conceive that the traditional notions of 'individual' and 'group' could remain intact in such a global rethinking of the field. Pines is talking about an essential 'paradigm shift', a change in basic premises underlying research, therapy and training.

The linking paradigm

Premises integrating psychoanalysis and group psychology can be found in the literature in both fields. The purpose here is to provide a frame of reference where these ideas can be examined, critiqued, and unified to form a conceptual schema.

Premise I:

The centrality of interaction in linking individual and group processes yields a trisystemic model of object relations

The fundamental premise of an integrating paradigm is that *through human interaction the inner life becomes transformed into social experiences and systems and, conversely, group experience comes to be personally and internally represented. The two dimensions of inner and group life are linked by an interface, a network system (perhaps epistemologically and developmentally prior to both the person and the group) consisting of verbal and non-verbal interactions linking members of a group.*

Bridge-building between psychoanalysis and group dynamics therefore must be based operationally in the study of communication. The 'individual' and the 'group' are actually two levels of analysis of communication. In one level of analysis, subjective report, empathy, and 'trial identification' reveal the inner and affective experience of the persons involved in the interaction, moving towards inferences about the underlying meaning of mentation and emotion. Here, one uses the psychoanalytic (or a related) method. On the other level, one studies the organizations and systems which emerge contextually and in multiperson configurations. By correlating communicative acts with the inner life and group organization and structure, one links the deep and developmental with the group process.

Such a similar 'strategy' for analysis was stated early on by Thelen and Whithall (1949):

It is proposed that we should start with extensive introspective and other techniques for eliciting data from the internal frame. Certain situational aspects...might emerge as things which could be satisfactorily treated from the objective...frame — Our theory would then relate two frames of reference commonly held to be the object of theoretical inquiry, namely

Behaviour=function of personality and environment
(Lewin)

Interaction=relationship between internal and objective conditions.

In psychoanalysis, Langs (1976a) has emphasized the centrality of the total system as a field of interaction in the psychoanalytic situation. The communications between patient and analyst take place within a contractual 'frame' and an 'adaptive field,' and modify the internal states of both parties to the interaction. The adaptive field is contextual and may include significant others as well as the institutional and socio-economic background for the analysis. It consists of group dynamics surrounding the treatment dyad as well as the non-human environment (the arrangement of the couch, the private and confidential setting, etc.). The term 'interaction' has been borrowed from Langs and is to be preferred to 'interpersonal relations' because it (a) unequivocally includes deep, unconscious layers of communications and (b) is a systems construct that refers specifically to what takes place between two or more persons. Through these concepts, Langs, in effect, introduced group dynamics into the psychoanalytic hour.

Thus, the paradigm linking psychoanalysis and group dynamics calls for the observation of the relationship among three or more systems or processes: the internal or intrapsychic system of the persons in the group; the system of communications and 'acts' among two or more persons; and the group-*qua*-group. These are not discrete units, but rather processes which translate from one to the other. To a great extent, the intrapsychic representations are internalized group systems, as for example dreams are often about significant others. Groups are projections of inner objects. Communications include empathically conveyed inner states and projective identifications of part objects into a container and may also represent 'monitoring' and 'transport' activities across organizational borders (cf. Miller and Rice, 1967).