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Re-View

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Group Dynamics

Using his psycho-analytic experience Freud¹ attempted to illuminate some of the obscurities revealed by Le Bon, McDougall, and others in their studies of the human group. I propose to discuss the bearing of modern developments of psycho-analysis, in particular those associated with the work of Melanie Klein, on the same problems. Her work shows that at the start of life itself the individual is in contact with the breast and, by rapid extension of primitive awareness, with the family group; furthermore she has shown that the nature of this contact displays qualities peculiar to itself, which are of profound significance both in the development of the individual and for a fuller understanding of the mechanisms already demonstrated by the intuitive genius of Freud.

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 (1931, 1946) as typical of the earliest phases of mental life. The adult must establish contact with the emotional life of the group in which he lives; this task would appear to be as formidable to the adult as the relationship with the breast

¹ Notably in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921).

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appears to be to the infant, and the failure to meet the demands of this task is revealed in his regression. The belief that a group exists, as distinct from an aggregate of individuals, is an essential part of this regression, as are also the characteristics with which the supposed group is endowed by the individual. Substance is given to the phantasy that the group exists by the fact that the regression involves the individual in a loss of his 'individual distinctiveness' (Freud, 1921, p. 9), indistinguishable from depersonalization, and therefore obscures observation that the aggregation is of individuals. It follows that if the observer judges a group to be in existence, the individuals composing it must have experienced this regression. Conversely, should the individuals composing a 'group' (using that word to mean an aggregation of individuals all in the same state of regression) for some reason or other becomes threatened by awareness of their individual distinctiveness, then the group is in the emotional state known as panic. This does not mean that the group is disintegrating, and it will be seen later that I do not agree that in panic the group has lost its cohesiveness.

In this paper I shall summarize certain theories at which I have arrived by applying in groups the intuitions developed by present-day psycho-analytic training. These theories differ from many others, in merits and defects alike, in being educed in the situations of emotional stress that they are intended to describe. I introduce some concepts new to psycho-analysis, partly because I deal with different subject matter, partly because I wanted to see if a start disencumbered by previous theories might lead to a point at which my views of the group and psycho-analytic views of the individual could be compared, and thereby judged to be either complementary or divergent.

There are times when I think that the group has an attitude to me, and that I can state in words what the attitude is;

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there are times when another individual acts as if he also thought the group had an attitude to him, and I believe I can deduce what his belief is; there are times when I think that the group has an attitude to an individual, and that I can say what it is. These occasions provide the raw material on which interpretations are based, but the interpretation itself is an attempt to translate into precise speech what I suppose to be the attitude of the group to me or to some other individual, and of the individual to the group. Only some of these occasions are used by me; I judge the occasion to be ripe for an interpretation when the interpretation would seem to be both obvious and unobserved.

The groups in which I have attempted to fill this role pass through a series of complex emotional episodes that permit the deduction of theories of group dynamics that I have found useful both in the illumination of what is taking place and in the exposure of nuclei of further developments. What follows is a summary of these theories.

The Work Group

In any group there may be discerned trends of mental activity. Every group, however casual, meets to 'do' something; in this activity, according to the capacities of the individuals, they co-operate. This co-operation is voluntary and depends on some degree of sophisticated skill in the individual. Participation in this activity is possible only to individuals with years of training and a capacity for experience that has permitted them to develop mentally. Since this activity is geared to a task, it is related to reality, its methods are rational, and, therefore, in however embryonic a form, scientific. Its characteristics are similar to those attributed by **Freud (1911)** to the ego. This facet of mental

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activity in a group I have called the Work Group. The term embraces only mental activity of a particular kind, not the people who indulge in it.

When patients meet for a group-therapy session it can always be seen that some mental activity is directed to the solution of the problems for which the individuals seek help. Here is an example of a passing phase in such a group:

Six patients and I are seated round a small room. Miss A suggests that it would be a good idea if members agreed to call each other by their Christian names.¹ There is some relief that a topic has been broached, glances are exchanged, and a flicker of synthetic animation is momentarily visible. Mr. B ventures that it is a good idea, and Mr. C says it would 'make things more friendly'. Miss A is encouraged to divulge her name but is forestalled by Miss D who says she does not like her Christian name and would rather it were not known. Mr. E suggests pseudonyms; Miss F examines her fingernails. Within a few minutes of Miss A's suggestion, the discussion has languished, and its place has been taken by furtive glances, an increasing number of which are directed towards me. Mr. B rouses himself to say that we must call each other something. The mood is now a compound of anxiety and increasing frustration. Long before I am mentioned it is clear that my name has become a preoccupation of the group. Left to its own devices the group promises to pass into apathy and silence.

For my present purposes I shall display such aspects of the episode as illustrate my use of the term work group. In the group itself I might well do the same, but that would depend on my assessment of the significance of the episode in the context of the group mental life, as far as it had then emerged.

¹ See also the discussion of taboo on names in *Totem and Taboo* (**Freud, 1913, P. 54**).

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First, it is clear that if seven people are to talk together it would help the discussion if names were available. In so far as the discussion has arisen through awareness of that fact it is a product of work-group activity. But the group has gone further than to propose a step that would be helpful in any group no matter what its task might be. The proposal has been made that Christian names should be used because that would make for friendliness. In the group of which I am speaking it would have been accurate to say that

the production of friendliness was regarded as strictly relevant to therapeutic need. At the point in its history from which the example is taken, it would also be true to say that both Miss D's objection and Mr. E's proposed solution would be regarded as dictated by therapeutic need; and in fact I pointed out that the suggestions fitted in with a theory, not yet explicitly stated, that our diseases would be cured if the group could be conducted in such a way that only pleasant emotions were experienced. It will be seen that the demonstration of work-group function must include: the development of thought designed for translation into action; the theory, in this instance the need for friendliness, on which it is based; the belief in environmental change as in itself sufficient for cure without any corresponding change in the individual; and finally a demonstration of the kind of fact that is believed to be 'real'.

It so happened, in the instance I have given, that I was subsequently able to demonstrate that work-group function, though I did not call it that, based on the idea that cure could be obtained from a group in which pleasant feelings only were experienced, did not appear to have produced the hoped-for cure; and indeed was being obstructed by some sort of difficulty in achieving a limited translation into the apparently simple act of assigning names. Before passing to the discussion of the nature of the obstructions to work-group

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activity, I would mention here a difficulty, which must already be evident, in the exposition of my theories. For me to describe a group episode, such as the one I have been discussing, and then to attempt the deduction of theories from it, is only to say that I have a theory that such-and-such took place and that I can say it again only in different language. The only way in which the reader can deliver himself from the dilemma is to recall to himself the memory of some committee or other gathering in which he has participated and consider to what extent he can recall evidence that could point to the existence of what I call work-group function, not forgetting the actual administrative structure, chairman and so forth, as material to be included in his review.

The Basic Assumptions

The interpretations in terms of work-group activity leave much unsaid; is the suggested use of pseudonyms motivated only with a view to meeting the demands of reality? The furtive glances, the preoccupation with the correct mode for addressing the analyst, which became quite overt subsequently, cannot profitably be interpreted as related to work-group function.

Work-group activity is obstructed, diverted, and on occasion assisted, by certain other mental activities that have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drives. These activities, at first sight chaotic, are given a certain cohesion if it is assumed that they spring from basic assumptions common to all the group. In the example I have given it was easy to recognize that one assumption common to all the group was that they were met together to receive some form of treatment from me. But exploration of this idea as part of work-group function showed that ideas existed invested

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with reality by force of the emotion attached to them, that were not in conformity even with the somewhat naive expectation consciously entertained by the less sophisticated members. Furthermore, even sophisticated individuals, one member for example being a graduate in science, showed by their behaviour that they shared these ideas.

The first assumption is that the group is met in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment, material and spiritual, and protection. Stated thus, my first basic assumption might be regarded as a repetition of my remark, above, that the group assumed that 'they were met together to receive some form of treatment from me', only differing from it in being couched in metaphorical terms. But the essential point is that the basic assumption can only be understood if the words in which I have stated it are taken as literal and not metaphorical.

Here is a description of a therapeutic group in which the dependent assumption, as I shall call it, is active.

Three women and two men were present. The group had on a previous occasion shown signs of work-group function directed towards curing the disability of its members; on this occasion they might be supposed to have reacted from this with despair, placing all their reliance on me to sort out their difficulties while they contented themselves with individually posing questions to which I was to provide the answers. One woman had brought some chocolate, which she diffidently invited her right-hand neighbour, another woman, to share. One man was eating a sandwich. A graduate in philosophy, who had in earlier sessions told the group he had no belief in God, and no religion, sat silent, as indeed he often did, until one of the women with a touch of acerbity in her tone, remarked that he had asked no questions. He replied, 'I do not need to talk because I know that I only have to come here long enough and all my

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questions will be answered without my having to do anything.'

I then said that I had become a kind of group deity; that the questions were directed to me as one who knew the answers without need to resort to work, that the eating was part of a manipulation of the group to give substance to a belief they wished to preserve about me, and that the philosopher's reply indicated a disbelief in the efficacy of prayer but seemed otherwise to belie earlier statements he had made about his disbelief in God. When I began my interpretation I was not only convinced of its truth but felt no doubt that I could convince the others by confrontation with the mass of material—only some of which I can convey in this printed account. By the time I had finished speaking I felt I had committed some kind of gaffe; I was surrounded by blank looks; the evidence had disappeared. After a time, the man, who had finished his sandwich and placed the carefully folded paper in his pocket, looked round the room, eyebrows slightly raised, interrogation in his glance. A woman looked tensely at me, another with hands folded gazed meditatively at the floor. In me a conviction began to harden that I had been guilty of blasphemy in a group of true believers. The second man, with elbow draped over the back of his chair, played with his fingers. The woman who was eating, hurriedly swallowed the last of her chocolate. I now interpreted that I had become a very bad person, casting doubts on the group deity, but that this had been followed by an increase of anxiety and guilt as the group had failed to dissociate itself from the impiety.

In this account I have dwelt on my own reactions in the group for a reason which I hope may become more apparent later. It can be justly argued that interpretations for which the strongest evidence lies, not in the observed facts in the group but in the subjective reactions of the analyst, are more

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likely to find their explanation in the psychopathology of the analyst than in the dynamics of the group. It is a just criticism, and one which will have to be met by years of careful work by more than one analyst, but for that very reason I shall leave it on one side and pass on to state now a contention that I shall support throughout this paper. It is that in group treatment many interpretations, and amongst them the most important, have to be made on the strength of the analyst's own emotional reactions. It is my belief that these reactions are dependent on the fact that the analyst in the group is at the receiving end of what **Melanie Klein (1946)** has called projective identification, and that this mechanism plays a very important role in groups. Now the experience of counter-transference appears to me to have quite a distinct quality that should enable the analyst to differentiate the occasion when he is the object of a projective identification from the occasion when he is not. The analyst feels he is being manipulated so as to be playing a part, no matter how difficult to recognize, in somebody else's phantasy—or he would do if it were not for what in recollection I can only call a temporary loss of insight, a sense of experiencing strong feelings and at the same time a belief that their existence is quite adequately justified by the objective situation without recourse to recondite explanation of their causation. From the analyst's point of view, the experience consists of two closely related phases: in the first there is a feeling that whatever else one has done, one has certainly not given a correct interpretation; in the second there is a sense of being a particular kind of person in a particular emotional situation. I believe ability to shake oneself out of the numbing feeling of reality that is a concomitant of this state is the prime requisite of the analyst in the group: if he can do this he is in a position to give what I believe is the correct interpretation, and thereby to see its connection with the previous

interpretation, the validity of which he has been caused to doubt.

I must return to consider the second basic assumption. Like the first, this also concerns the purpose for which the group has met. My attention was first aroused by a session in which the conversation was monopolized by a man and woman who appeared more or less to ignore the rest of the group. The occasional exchange of glances amongst the others seemed to suggest the view, not very seriously entertained, that the relationship was amatory, although one would hardly say that the overt content of the conversation was very different from other interchanges in the group. I was, however, impressed with the fact that individuals, who were usually sensitive to any exclusion from supposedly therapeutic activity, which at that time had come to mean talking and obtaining an 'interpretation' from me or some other member of the group, seemed not to mind leaving the stage entirely to this pair. Later it became clear that the sex of the pair was of no particular consequence to the assumption that pairing was taking place. There was a peculiar air of hopefulness and expectation about these sessions which made them rather different from the usual run of hours of boredom and frustration. It must not be supposed that the elements to which I would draw attention, under the title of pairing group, are exclusively or even predominantly in evidence. In fact there is plenty of evidence of states of mind of the kind we are familiar with in psycho-analysis; it would indeed be extraordinary, to take one example, if one did not see in individuals evidence of reaction to a group situation that could approximate to an acting out of the primal scene. But, in my opinion, to allow one's attention to be absorbed by these reactions is to make difficult any observation of what is peculiar to the group; furthermore I think such concentration at worst can lead to a debased psycho-analysis rather

than an exploration of the therapeutic possibilities of the group. The reader must, then, assume that in this, as in other situations, there will always be a plethora of material familiar in a psycho-analysis, but still awaiting its evaluation in the situation of the group; this material I propose for the present to ignore, and I shall now turn to a consideration of the air of hopeful expectation that I have mentioned as a characteristic of the pairing group. It usually finds expression verbally in ideas that marriage would put an end to neurotic disabilities; that group therapy would revolutionize society when it had spread sufficiently; that the coming season, spring, summer, autumn, or winter, as the case may be, will be more agreeable; that some new kind of community—an improved group—should be developed, and so on. These expressions tend to divert attention to some supposedly future event, but for the analyst the crux is not a future event but the immediate present—the feeling of hope itself. This feeling is characteristic of the pairing group and must be taken by itself as evidence that the pairing group is in existence, even when other evidence appears to be lacking. It is itself both a precursor of sexuality and a part of it. The optimistic ideas that are verbally expressed are rationalizations intended to effect a displacement in time and a compromise with feelings of guilt—the enjoyment of the feeling is justified by appeal to an outcome supposedly morally unexceptionable. The feelings thus associated in the pairing group are at the opposite pole to feelings of hatred, destructiveness, and despair. For the feelings of hope to be sustained it is essential that the 'leader' of the group, unlike the leader of the dependent group and of the fight-flight group, should be unborn. It is a person or idea that will save the group—in fact from feelings of hatred, destructiveness, and despair, of its own or of another group—but in order to do this, obviously, the Messianic hope must never be fulfilled. Only by remaining

a hope does hope persist. The difficulty is that, thanks to the rationalization of the dawning sexuality of the group, the premonition of sex which obtrudes as hope, there is a tendency for the work group to be influenced in the direction of producing a Messiah, be it person, idea, or Utopia. In so far as it succeeds, hope is weakened; for obviously nothing is then to hope for, and, since destructiveness, hatred, and despair have in no way been radically influenced, their existence again makes itself felt. This in turn accelerates a

further weakening of hope. If, for purposes of discussion, we accept the idea that the group should be manipulated in order to compass hopefulness in the group, then it is necessary that those who concern themselves with such a task, either in their capacity as members of a specialized work group such as I shall describe shortly, or as individuals, should see to it that Messianic hopes do not materialize. The danger, of course, is that such specialized work groups will either suffer through excess of zeal and thereby interfere with innocent, creative work-group function or alternatively allow themselves to be forestalled and so put to the troublesome necessity of liquidating the Messiah and then recreating the Messianic hope. In the therapeutic group the problem is to enable the group to be consciously aware of the feelings of hope, and its affiliations, and at the same time tolerant of them. That it is tolerant of them in the pairing group is a function of the basic assumption and cannot be regarded as a sign of individual development.

The third basic assumption is that the group has met to fight something or to run away from it. It is prepared to do either indifferently. I call this state of mind the fight-flight group; the accepted leader of a group in this state is one whose demands on the group are felt to afford opportunity for flight or aggression and if he makes demands that do not do so, he is ignored. In a therapeutic group the analyst is the

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work-group leader. The emotional backing that he can command is subject to fluctuation according to the active basic assumption and the extent to which his activities are felt to fit in with what is required of a leader in these differing states of mind. In the fight-flight group the analyst finds that attempts to illuminate what is taking place are obstructed by the ease with which emotional support is obtained for such proposals as express either hatred of all psychological difficulty or alternatively the means by which it can be evaded. In this context I would remark that the proposal to use Christian names, in the first example I gave, might well have been interpreted as an expression of the desire for flight in a fight-flight group though, in fact, for reasons connected with the stage of development that the group had reached, I interpreted it in terms of work-group function.

Characteristics Common to All Basic Assumption Groups

Participation in basic-assumption activity requires no training, experience, or mental development. It is instantaneous, inevitable, and instinctive: I have not felt the need to postulate the existence of a herd instinct to account for such phenomena as I have witnessed in the group.¹ In contrast with work-group function basic-assumption activity makes no demands on the individual for a capacity to co-operate but depends on the individual's possession of what I call valency—a term I borrow from the physicists to express a capacity for instantaneous involuntary combination of one individual with another for sharing and acting on a basic assumption.

¹ In contrast with **W. Trotter (1916)** but in agreement with **Freud (1921, p. 3)**.

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Work-group function is always in evidence with one, and only one, basic assumption. Though the work-group function may remain unaltered, the contemporary basic assumption that pervades its activities can be changing frequently; there may be two or three changes in an hour or the same basic assumption may be dominant for months on end. To account for the fate of the inactive basic assumptions I have postulated the existence of a proto-mental system in which physical and mental activity is undifferentiated, and which lies outside the field ordinarily considered profitable for psychological investigations. It must be borne in mind that the question whether a field is suitable for psychological investigation depends on other factors besides the nature of the field to be investigated, one being the potency of the investigating psychological technique. The recognition of a field of psychosomatic medicine illustrates the difficulty that attends any attempt at determination of the line that separates psychological from physical phenomena. I propose therefore to leave indeterminate the limits that separate the active basic assumption from those I have relegated to the hypothetical proto-mental system.

Many techniques are in daily use for the investigation of work-group function. For the investigation of basic-assumption phenomena, I consider psycho-analysis, or some extension of technique derived directly from it, to be essential. But since work-group functions are always pervaded by basic-assumption phenomena it is clear that techniques that ignore the latter will give misleading impressions of the former.

Emotions associated with basic assumptions may be described by the usual terms, anxiety, fear, hate, love, and the like. But the emotions common to any basic assumption are subtly affected by each other as if they were held in a combination peculiar to the active basic assumption. That is to say, anxiety in the dependent group has a different

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quality from anxiety evident in the pairing group, and so on with other feelings.

All basic assumptions include the existence of a leader, although in the pairing group, as I have said, the leader is 'non-existent', i.e. unborn. This leader need not be identified with any individual in the group; it need not be a person at all but may be identified with an idea or an inanimate object. In the dependent group the place of leader may be filled by the history of the group. A group, complaining of an inability to remember what took place on a previous occasion, sets about making a record of its meetings. This record then becomes a 'bible' to which appeal is made, if, for example, the individual whom the group has invested with leadership proves to be refractory material for moulding into the likeness proper to the dependent leader. The group resorts to bible-making when threatened with an idea the acceptance of which would entail development on the part of the individuals comprising the group. Such ideas derive emotional force, and excite emotional opposition, from their association with characteristics appropriate to the pairing-group leader. When the dependent group or the fight-flight group is active, a struggle takes place to suppress the new idea because it is felt that the emergence of the new idea threatens the *status quo*. In war, the new idea—be it a tank or a new method for selecting officers—is felt to be 'new-fangled', i.e. opposed to the military bible. In the dependent group it is felt to threaten the dependent leader, be that leader 'bible' or person. But the same is true of the pairing-group, for here the new idea or person, being equated with the unborn genius or Messiah, must, as I have said before, remain unborn if it, or he, is to fulfil the pairing-group function.

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Aberrant Forms of Change from One Basic One Assumption to Another

Change in the mentality of the group need not be due to the displacement of one basic assumption by another and can take certain aberrant forms which depend on what basic assumption is active when tension increases. These aberrant forms always involve an extraneous group. If the dependent group is active, and is threatened by pressure of the pairing-group leader, particularly perhaps in the form of an idea which is suffused with Messianic hope, then if methods such as a resort to bible-making prove inadequate, the threat is countered by provoking the influx of another group. If the fight-flight group is active, the tendency is to absorb another group. If the pairing group is active, the tendency is to schism. This last reaction may appear anomalous unless it is remembered that in the pairing group the Messianic hope, be it person or idea, must remain unrealized. The crux of the matter lies in the threat of the new idea to demand development and the inability of the basic-assumption groups to tolerate development. The reasons for this I shall educe later.

The Specialized Work Group

There are certain specialized work groups, to which **Freud (1921, pp. 41 f)** has drawn attention though not under this name, whose task is peculiarly prone to stimulate the activity of a particular basic assumption. Typical groups of this nature are provided by a Church or an Army. A Church is liable to interference from dependent-group phenomena, and the Army suffers a similar liability from fight-flight group phenomena. But another possibility has to be considered, namely that these groups are budded off by the main group of which they form a part, for the specific purpose of

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neutralizing dependent group and fight-flight group respectively and thus preventing their obstruction of the work-group function of the main group. If we adopt the latter hypothesis, it must be regarded as a failure in the specialized work group if dependent or fight-flight group activity either ceases to manifest itself within the specialized work groups or else grows to overwhelming strength. In either case the result is the same—the main group has to take over the functions proper to the specialized work group, and yet fulfil its work-group functions. If the specialized work group cannot, or does not, cope with the basic-assumption phenomena that are its province, then the work-group functions of the main group are vitiated by the pressure of these basic assumptions. As work-group function consists essentially of the translation of thoughts and feelings into behaviour which is adapted to reality, it is ill-adapted to give expression to basic assumptions. For basic assumptions become dangerous in proportion as the attempt is made to translate them into action. Indeed, the specialized work group has tended to recognize this and shows it by the attempt to carry out the reverse process, namely to translate action into terms of basic-assumption mentality—a much safer proceeding. Thus, a Church, when presented with some notable achievement of work-group function, will adjure the group to give thanks to its deity and not to its capacity for realistic hard work, *'non nobis, Domine'*. The prosperous and successful Church, from the point of view of easing work-group function, must combine fortification of religious belief with the insistence that it must never be acted on; the successful fighting service must encourage the belief that anything can be done by force provided always it is never used. In both cases it comes to this—basic-assumption mentality does not lend itself to translation into action, since action requires work-group function to maintain contact with reality.

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In the small therapeutic group, the tendency, when the dependent group is active, is to produce a sub-group which then takes on the function of interpreting the dependent-group leader—usually located in the analyst—to the group. In the fight-flight group a similar sub-group fulfils a similar function. If the analyst proves obdurate material, he is liable to evoke reactions which I have already described as associated with the threat of the new idea.

I have mentioned above (p. 136) that an aristocracy may constitute the specialized work group that fulfils for the pairing group functions similar to those which Church or Army fulfil for the dependent and fight-flight groups respectively. The function of this sub-group is to provide an outlet for feelings centred on ideas of breeding and birth, that is to say for Messianic hope, which I have already suggested is a precursor to sexual desire, without ever arousing the fear that such feelings will give rise to an event that will demand development. The aristocracy must inspire Messianic hope but at the same time confidence that the pairing-group leader, if he materializes, will be born in a palace but be just like ourselves—*'democratic'* is probably the modern cant term for the desired quality. In the therapeutic group the *'aristocratic'* sub-group usually helps the group to understand that the new idea is one with which they are already quite familiar.

Basic Assumption, Time, and Development

There are two characteristics of basic-assumption mentality to which I would draw attention. Time plays no part in it; it is a dimension of mental function that is not recognized; consequently all activities that require an awareness of time are imperfectly comprehended and tend to arouse feelings of persecution. Interpretations of activity on the level of the

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basic assumptions lay bare a disturbed relationship to time. The second characteristic, which I mentioned earlier, is the absence of any process of development as a part of basic assumption mentality; stimuli to development meet with a hostile response. It will be appreciated that this is a matter of importance in any group that purports, by the study of the group, to promote a therapeutic development of insight. Hostility thus engendered tends to determine that the reaction to the emergence of the Messianic person or idea will take an aberrant form rather than spend itself in the cyclic change from one basic assumption to another. For, if a group wishes to prevent development, the simplest way to do so is to allow itself to be overwhelmed by basic-assumption mentality and thus become approximated to the one kind of mental life

in which a capacity for development is not required. The main compensation for such a shift appears to be an increase in a pleasurable feeling of vitality.

The defence that schism affords against the development-threatening idea can be seen in the operation of the schismatic groups, ostensibly opposed but in fact promoting the same end. One group adheres to the dependent group, often in the form of the group 'bible'. This group popularizes the established ideas by denuding them of any quality that might demand painful effort and thereby secures a numerous adherence of those who oppose the pains of development. Thought thus becomes stabilized on a level that is platitudinous and dogmatic. The reciprocal group, supposedly supporting the new idea, becomes so exacting in its demands that it ceases to recruit itself. Thus both groups avoid the painful bringing together of the primitive and the sophisticated that is the essence of the developmental conflict. The superficial but numerous schismatics are thus opposed by the profound but numerically negligible schismatics. The result reminds one of the fear expressed sometimes that a society

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breeds copiously from its least cultural members while the 'best' people remain obdurately sterile.

Relation of One Basic Assumption to Another

We may now reconsider the three basic-assumption groups and the work group to see if they are not capable of resolution into something more fundamental. Granting that the postulate of basic assumptions helps to give form and meaning to the complex and chaotic emotional state that the group unfolds to the investigating participant, there is yet no reasonable explanation of why such assumptions should exist. It is clear that no one of the three basic assumptions about the group satisfactorily allays fear of the group and its emotions, otherwise there would be none of the shifts and changes from one to another and no need for the formation, which I have sketched out, of the corresponding specialized work groups. All three basic assumptions contain the idea of a leader. The fight-flight group shows a total absence of recognition of understanding as a technique. All are opposed to development, which is itself dependent on understanding. The work group, on the other hand, recognizes a need both to understand and to develop. If we consider the specialized work groups, all three are concerned with matters that appear to lie outside the province of the basic assumption with which they appear primarily to be concerned. Thus the specialized work group of the dependent basic assumption is not free from preoccupation with Messianic ideas that appear to be more in the sphere of pairing-group activity than of the dependent group. Effort here seems to be devoted to a Messiah born, out of wedlock, in a bed of bulrushes or a manger, with one exalted parent, Pharaoh's daughter or the Deity, and one less exalted. In the pairing group the aristocratic sub-group allows exalted parents, wedlock, and a

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palatial crib, but the child is notable only in being one with the rest of us. A scrutiny of the facts seems to lead to a central difficulty in bringing together sexual love, equal parents, an infant like ourselves, the Messianic hope which I consider to be an essential component of the sexual love, and a compulsion to develop that in itself necessitates a capacity for understanding. The fight-flight group expresses a sense of incapacity for understanding and the love without which understanding cannot exist. But the leader of the fight-flight group brings back into view one of the feared components, an approximation either to the dreaded father or the infant.

Furthermore, the three basic-assumption groups seem each in turn to be aggregates of individuals sharing out between them the characteristics of one character in the Œdipal situation, which are depending on whichever basic assumption is active. The parallel with the characters in the Œdipal situation is however marked by important divergences. The relationship appears to be between the individual and the group. But the group is felt as one fragmented individual with another, hidden, in attendance. The hidden individual is the leader, and although this appears to contradict the constantly reiterated statement that the analyst is the leader, the contradiction is resolved if it is remembered that in the therapeutic group the analyst is the work-group leader, and if attention is paid to the many indications that he is suspected of leading, but apparently only rarely perceived to be leading. It is quite common, in my experience, to be told I am not taking any

part in the group or ever giving the group a *chance to know what my views are*, although the probability is that I am doing more talking than anyone else. The essential point here, as always in a group, is the feeling with which the idea expressed is accompanied, and the point I would emphasize again is that I am suspected of, but not perceived to be, leading the group.

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On the emotional plane, where basic assumptions are dominant, Oedipal figures, as I have indicated, can be discerned in the material just as they are in a psycho-analysis. But they include one component of the Oedipal myth of which little has been said, and that is the sphinx. In so far as I am felt to be leader of work-group function, and recognition of that fact is seldom absent, I, and the work-group function with which I am identified, am invested with feelings that would be quite appropriate to the enigmatic, brooding, and questioning sphinx from whom disaster emanates. In fact terms are sometimes employed, on occasions when my intervention has provoked more than usual anxiety, which hardly require interpretation to enable the group to grasp the similarity. I know of no experience that demonstrates more clearly than the group experience the dread with which a questioning attitude is regarded. This anxiety is not directed only towards the questioner but also to the object of the inquiry and is, I suspect, secondary to the latter. For the group, as being the object of inquiry, itself arouses fears of an extremely primitive kind. My impression is that the group approximates too closely, in the minds of the individuals composing it, to very primitive phantasies about the contents of the mother's body.¹ The attempt to make a rational investigation of the dynamics of the group is therefore perturbed by fears, and mechanisms for dealing with them, that are characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position. The investigation cannot be carried out without the stimulation and activation of these levels.

We are now in a better position to consider whether the basic assumptions are capable of resolution into something more fundamental. I have drawn attention already to the fact that these three states of mind have resemblances to

¹ Melanie Klein.

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each other that would lead me to suppose that they may not be fundamental phenomena, but rather expressions of, or reactions against, some state more worthy of being regarded as primary. In fact, although I have found the hypothesis of basic assumptions a valuable aid in producing order out of the chaos of material in a group session, it is soon clear that further investigation demands fresh hypotheses. The need, and the way to the hypothesis that might satisfy it, became apparent to me in considering what could precipitate the change from one basic assumption to another. I include in this discussion the aberrant forms I have already described.

In brief, no matter what basic assumption is active, investigation discloses that the elements in the emotional situation are so closely allied to phantasies of the earlier anxieties that the group is compelled, whenever the pressure of anxiety becomes too great, to take defensive action. Approached from this primitive level, the basic assumptions take on a different aspect from that which they present in the descriptions I have already given. The impulse to pair may now be seen to possess a component derived from psychotic anxiety associated with primitive Oedipal conflicts working on a foundation of part-object relationships. 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.

But if the pairing group is active, again we find that many of its components are too close to primitive part objects to escape identification with them so that it is only a matter of time before psychotic anxiety is aroused with such force that new defence must be found. Let us suppose that it takes the form of the fight-flight group, that is to say the release of hate which finds an outlet either in destructive attacks on a supposed enemy or flight from the hated object. The

indifference of the group to the individual, and still more the inability of the group to escape by this means from the primitive primal scene, again leads to release of anxiety and the need for another change of basic assumption.

It will be seen from this description that the basic assumptions now emerge as formations secondary to an extremely early primal scene worked out on a level of part objects, and associated with psychotic anxiety and mechanisms of splitting and projective identification such as Melanie Klein has described as characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Introjection and projection of the group,¹ which is now the feared investigator, now the feared object of investigation, form an essential part of the picture and help to add confusion to the scene unless recognized as being very active.

The classical view of the primal scene does not go far enough to deal with the dynamics of the group. I must stress the point that I consider it essential to work out very thoroughly the primitive primal scene as it discloses itself in the group. This differs markedly from the primal scene in its classical description in that it is much more bizarre and seems to assume that a part of one parent, the breast or the mother's body, contains amongst other objects a part of the father. In her paper on early stages of the Oedipus conflict, Melanie Klein (1928; also 1945) gives a description of these phantasies as she discovered them in the process of individual analysis (see Paula Heimann, 1952b). The group experience seems to me to give ample material to support the view that these phantasies are of paramount importance for the group.²

¹ How this appears in psycho-analysis is described by Paula Heimann (1952a).

² It is worth noting that Melanie Klein's description of the psychotic reaction to external objects in her paper on 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict' (1928) is markedly similar to the group's reaction to ideas. Bible-making is one form of defence against them.

The more disturbed the group, the more easily discernible are these primitive phantasies and mechanisms; the more stable the group, the more it corresponds with Freud's description of the group as a repetition of family group patterns and neurotic mechanisms. But even in the 'stable' group the deep psychotic levels should be demonstrated, though it may involve temporarily an apparent increase in the 'illness' of the group.

Summary

Before turning to discuss psycho-analytic views of the group, I think it is necessary to sum up the theories I have described so far. It will be remembered that I attempted deliberately, in so far as it is possible to a psycho-analyst admittedly proposing to investigate the group through psycho-analytically developed intuitions, to divest myself of any earlier psychoanalytic theories of the group in order to achieve an unprejudiced view. In the result I have arrived at a theory of the group as giving evidence of work-group functions together with behaviour, often strongly emotionally coloured, which suggested that groups were reacting emotionally to one of three basic assumptions. The idea that such basic assumptions are made involuntarily, automatically, inevitably has seemed useful in illuminating the behaviour of the group. Nevertheless, there is much to suggest that these supposed 'basic assumptions' cannot be regarded as distinct states of mind. By that I do not mean to claim that they are 'basic' explanations which between them explain all conduct in the group—that would indeed be extravagant nonsense—but that each state, even when it is possible to differentiate it with reasonable certainty from the other two, has about it a quality that suggests it may in some way be the dual, or reciprocal of one of the other two, or perhaps simply another view of what one had thought to be a different basic

assumption. For example, the Messianic hope of the pairing group has some similarity to the group deity of the dependent group. It may be difficult to see because the presenting emotional tone is so different. Anxiety, fear, hate, love, all, as I have said, exist in each basic-assumption group. The modification that feelings suffer in combination in the respective basic-assumption group may arise because the 'cement' so to speak, that joined them to each other is guilt and depression in the dependent group, Messianic hope in the pairing group, anger and hate in the fight-flight group. Be that as it may, the result is that the thought content of the discussion may appear as a result to be deceptively different in the three groups. It is possible at times to feel that the unborn genius of the pairing group is very similar to the god of the dependent group; certainly on those occasions when the dependent group appeals to the authority of a 'past' leader it comes very close to the pairing group, which appeals to a 'future' leader. In both the leader does not exist; there is a difference of tense and a difference in emotion.

I reiterate these points to show that the hypothesis of the basic assumptions that I have put forward cannot be regarded as a rigid formulation.

The Psycho-Analytic View

Freud's theories of the group derive from his study of the transference. Since the pair relationship of psycho-analysis can be regarded as a part of the larger group situation, the transference relationship could be expected, for the reasons I have already given, to be coloured by the characteristics associated with the pairing group. If analysis is regarded as part of the total group situation, we should expect to find sexual elements prominent in the material there presented,

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and the suspicions and hostilities of psycho-analysis as a sexual activity active in that part of the group which is in fact excluded from the analysis.

From his experience of analysis Freud was able to deduce the significance of two of what I have called specialized work groups, Army and Church, but did not discuss the specialized work group that attaches most importance to breeding, and is therefore most likely to have to deal with pairing-group phenomena, namely the aristocracy. If the aristocracy were concerned simply with the external reality, its activity would far more closely resemble the work of a genetics department in a university than it does. But the interest shown in breeding has not the scientific aura we should associate with mental activity directed to external reality: it is a specialized work group split off to deal with pairing-group phenomena in much the same way as the army has to deal with fight-flight phenomena and the Church with dependent-group phenomena. Therefore, the relationship of this sub-group with the main group will not be determined by the degree of fidelity to the strict genetic principles with which it conducts its affairs but rather by the efficiency with which it satisfies the main-group demand that pairing-group phenomena are dealt with so that work-group functions of the total group are not obstructed by emotional drives from that source. Although he expressly disavowed any but a superficial study of the group problem (1913, pp. 75 ff), and made his observations in the course of a discussion of the views of Le Bon, McDougall, and Wilfred Trotter, **Freud (1921, passim)** in fact had ample experience of the group and what it means to be an individual caught up in its emotional stresses—as I have indicated by my picture of the position psycho-analysis is likely to occupy in a group in which it stimulates a pairing group.

Freud (1930, pp. 44 ff) says individual and group psychology

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cannot be absolutely differentiated because the psychology of the individual is itself a function of the relationship between one person and another. He objects that it is difficult to attribute to number a significance so great as to make it capable by itself of arousing in our mental life a new instinct that is otherwise not brought into play. In this view I think Freud right; I have not at any time met with any phenomena that require explanation by a postulation of a herd instinct. The individual is, and always has been, a member of a group, even if his membership of it consists of behaving in such a way that reality is given to an idea that he does not belong to a group at all. The individual is a group animal at war, both with

the group and with those aspects of his personality that constitute his 'groupishness' Freud (1921, p. 29) limits this war to a struggle with 'culture' but I hope to show that this requires further expansion.

McDougall and Le Bon seem to speak as if group psychology comes into being only when a number of people are collected together in one place at one time, and Freud does not disavow this. For my part this is not necessary except to make study possible: the aggregation of individuals is only necessary in the way that it is necessary for analyst and analysed to come together for the transference relationship to be demonstrable. Only by coming together are adequate conditions provided for the demonstration of the characteristics of the group; only if individuals come sufficiently close to each other is it possible to give an interpretation without shouting it; equally, it is necessary for all members of the group to be able to witness the evidence on which interpretations are based. For these reasons the numbers of the group, and the degree of dispersion, must be limited. The congregation of the group in a particular place at a particular time is, for these mechanical reasons, important, but it has no significance for the production of group phenomena; the

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idea that it has springs from the impression that a thing must commence at the moment when its existence becomes demonstrable. In fact no individual, however isolated in time and space, should be regarded as outside a group or lacking in active manifestations of group psychology. Nevertheless, the existence of group behaviour is, as I say, clearly more easy to demonstrate, and even to observe, if the group is brought together; and I think it is this increased ease of observation and demonstration that is responsible for the idea of a herd instinct, such as Trotter postulates, or of the various other theories I have already mentioned which amount in the end to the idea that a group is more than the sum of its members. My experience convinces me that Freud was right to reject any such concept as, on present evidence, unnecessary. The apparent difference between group psychology and individual psychology is an illusion produced by the fact that the group brings into prominence phenomena that appear alien to an observer unaccustomed to using the group.^{1,2}

I attribute great force and influence to the work group, which, through its concern with reality, is compelled to employ the methods of science in no matter how rudimentary a form; despite the influence of the basic assumptions, and sometimes in harmony with them, it is the work group that triumphs in the long run. Le Bon said that the group never thirsts after the truth. I agree with Freud's opinion—given particularly in discussing the part played by the group in the production of language,³ folk-song, folk-lore, etc.—that in

1 See discussion of these points on pp. 131 *et seq.*

2 It is also a matter of historical development; there are aspects of group behaviour which appear strange unless there is some understanding of Melanie Klein's work on the psychoses. See particularly papers on symbol formation and schizoid mechanisms. I develop this point later.

3 Later in this paper I discuss one aspect of the development of language.

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saying this Le Bon is unfair to the group. When McDougall says that conditions in the highly organized group remove 'the psychological disadvantages of group formation' he approximates to my view that the function of the specialized work group is to manipulate the basic assumption so as to prevent obstruction of the work group. Freud describes the problem as one of procuring for the group 'precisely those features that were characteristic of the individual and are extinguished in him by the formation of the group'. He postulates an individual outside the primitive group who possessed his own continuity, his self-consciousness, his traditions and customs, his own particular functions and position. He says that, owing to his entry into an 'unorganized' group, the individual had lost his distinctiveness for a time. I think the struggle of the individual to preserve his distinctiveness assumes different characteristics according to the state of mind of the group at any given moment. Group organization gives stability and permanence to the work group, which is felt to be more easily submerged by the basic assumptions if the group is unorganized. Individual distinctiveness is no part of life in a group that is acting on the basic assumptions. Organization and structure are weapons of the work group. They are the product of cooperation between

members of the group, and their effect, once established in the group, is to demand still further cooperation from the individuals in the group. In this respect McDougall's organized group is always a work group and never a basic-assumption group. A group acting on basic assumption would need neither organization nor a capacity for co-operation. The counterpart of co-operation in the basic-assumption group is valency—a spontaneous, unconscious function of the gregarious quality in the personality of man. It is only when a group begins to act on a basic assumption that difficulties arise. Action inevitably means

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contact with reality, and contact with reality compels regard for truth; scientific method is imposed, and the evocation of the work group follows. Le Bon described the leader as one under whom a collection of human beings instinctively place themselves, accepting his authority as their chief; the leader must fit in with the group in his personal qualities and must himself be held by a strong faith in order to awaken the group's faith. His view of the leader as one who must fit in with the group in his personal qualities is compatible with my view that any leader is ignored by the group when his behaviour or characteristics fall outside the limits set by the prevalent basic assumption. Further, the leader must be held by the same 'faith' that holds the group—not in order to awaken the group's faith but because the attitude of group and leader alike are functions of the active basic assumption.

McDougall's (1920, p. 45) distinction between the simple 'unorganized' group and the 'organized' group seems to me to apply, not to two different groups but to two states of mind that can be observed to co-exist in the same group. The 'organized' group, for reasons I have already given, is likely to display the characteristic features of the work group; the 'unorganized' of the basic-assumption group. Freud discusses McDougall's views, quoting his description of the 'unorganized' group. With regard to the suggestibility of the group, I think it depends what the suggestion is. If it falls within the terms of the active basic assumption, the group will follow it, if it does not, the group will ignore it. This characteristic seems to me to come out very clearly in panic, to which I refer later.

McDougall, discussed by Freud in the above-mentioned passage, draws up certain conditions for raising the level of collective mental life. 'The first of these conditions,' he says (1920, p. 49), 'which is the basis of all the rest, is some degree

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of continuity of existence of the group.' This convinces me that in the organized group McDougall is describing what I call the work group. Meyer Fortes (1949), discussing Rad-cliffe Brown's views on social structure, particularly the distinction between 'structure as an actually existing concrete reality' and 'structural form' says that the distinction is associated with the continuity of social structure through time. In my view the continuity of social structure through time is a function of the work group. Meyer Fortes states that the time factor in social structure is by no means uniform in its incidence and adds that all corporate groups, by definition, must have continuity. As with McDougall's distinction between organized and unorganized groups, so with the incidence of the time factor, I do not believe that we are dealing with two different kinds of group, in the sense of two different aggregates of individuals, but rather with two different categories of mental activity co-existing in the same group of individuals. In work-group activity time is intrinsic: in basic assumption activity it has no place. Basic-assumption group functions are active before ever a group comes together in a room, and continue after the group has dispersed. There is neither development nor decay in basic-assumption functions, and in this respect they differ totally from those of the work group. It is therefore to be expected that observation of the group's continuity in time will produce anomalous and contradictory results if it has not been recognized that two different kinds of mental functioning operate within the group at the same time. The man who asks, 'When does the group meet again?' is referring, in so far as he is talking about mental phenomena, to work group. The basic-assumption group does not disperse or meet, and references to time have no meaning in the basic-assumption group. I have known a group of intelligent men, to whom the hours of the sessions were perfectly well known, express

anger because the session had ended, and to be quite unable for an appreciable time to grasp a fact that could not be a matter of doubt in work-group mentality. What is ordinarily called impatience must therefore, in the basic-assumption group, be considered as an expression of the anxiety which is aroused by phenomena intrinsically co-mingled with a dimension of which basic-assumption mentality knows nothing. It is as if a blind man were made aware of phenomena that could be understood only by one to whom the properties of light were familiar.

I would describe McDougall's principles for raising collective mental life to a higher level as an expression of the attempt to prevent obstruction of work group by basic-assumption group. His second condition stresses the need for the individual to have a clear view of the aims of the work group. His fourth point desiderates the existence of a body of traditions and customs and habits in the minds of the members of the group that will determine their relations to one another and to the group as a whole; this approximates to Plato's view that group harmony must be based on individual function and the firmness with which the individual is restricted to it. But it also has affinities with St. Augustine's view, in the 19th Book of *The City of God*, that a right relation with his fellows can only be achieved by a man who has first regulated his relationship with God. This may seem to contradict my statement that McDougall is concerned in his description of the organized group primarily with work-group phenomena. The difference between the two writers would seem to be this: McDougall is concerned to cope with basic assumptions by strengthening the work group's capacity to retain contact with external reality, while St. Augustine is elaborating a technique by which a specialized work group is formed with the specific function of maintaining contact with the basic assumption—in particular

with the dependent basic assumption. It is worth remembering that he was concerned to defend Christianity against the charge of having so undermined morale that Rome had been unable to resist the onslaught of Alaric. Put in other terms, a body or group had arisen that was under suspicion of having dealt with basic assumptions in a manner less efficient than that of their pagan predecessors. St. Augustine is uneasily concerned to refute this. It is a predicament with which those who purport to lead both public and group are not unfamiliar: the stimulation, and manipulation, of basic assumption, especially when done, as in some sort it must always be done, without anything like adequate knowledge, or even awareness, must lead to untoward results and sometimes even to the dock.

I shall now consider that part of Freud's discussion which turns on the statement that in a group an individual's emotions become extraordinarily intensified, while his intellectual ability becomes markedly reduced. About this I shall have something to say later when considering the group from the point of view of the individual, but I wish for the present to approach the matter, as **Freud (1921, p. 33)** does, as a group phenomenon. In the groups I have studied it has been natural for the group to expect me to take the lead in organizing its activities. As I take advantage of the position thus accorded me to lead the group in the direction of demonstrating group dynamics, the 'organization' of the group does not do what McDougall says the organization of the group is intended to do. The desire for an 'organized' group, in McDougall's sense, is frustrated. Fear of the basic assumptions, which cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by structure and organization, therefore expresses itself in the suppression of emotion, emotion being an essential part of the basic assumptions. The tension thus produced appears to the individual as an intensification of emotion; the lack of structure

promotes the obtusion of the basic-assumption group, and since in such a group the intellectual activity is, as I have already said, of an extremely limited kind, the individual, conforming with the behaviour imposed by participation in the basic-assumption group, feels as if his intellectual capacity were being reduced. The belief that this really is so is reinforced because the individual tends to ignore all intellectual activity that

does not fit in with the basic assumption. In fact I do not in the least believe that there is a reduction of intellectual ability in the group, nor yet that 'great decisions in the realm of thought and momentous discoveries and solutions of problems are only possible to an individual working in solitude' (**McDougall, 1920**); although the belief that this is so is commonly expressed in the group discussion, and all sorts of plans are elaborated for circumventing the supposedly pernicious influence of the emotions of the group. Indeed I give interpretations because I believe that intellectual activity of a high order is possible in a group together with an awareness (and not an evasion) of the emotions of the basic-assumption groups. If group therapy is found to have a value, I believe it will be in the conscious experiencing of the group activity of this kind.

Freud turns to discussion of something that crops up under a variety of names, such as 'suggestion', 'imitation', 'prestige of leaders', 'contagion'. I have used 'valency' partly because I would avoid the meanings that already adhere to the terms I have listed, partly because the term 'valency', as used in physics to denote the power of combination of atoms, carries with it the greatest penumbra of suggestiveness useful for my purpose. By it I mean the capacity of the individual for instantaneous combination with other individuals in an established pattern of behaviour—the basic assumptions. Later I shall consider in greater detail what meaning we

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should attribute to this term when I am dealing with the psycho-analytic view of the individual's contribution.

I shall not follow Freud's discussion in detail, but will pass on to his use of the term 'libido' which he takes from his study of the psycho-neuroses (**Freud, 1921**). He thus approaches the group by way of psycho-analysis, and psychoanalysis, in the light of my experience of groups, can be regarded as a work group likely to stimulate the basic assumption of pairing; that being so, psycho-analytic investigation, as itself a part of pairing group, is likely to reveal sexuality in a central position. Further, it is likely to be attacked as itself a sexual activity since, according to my view of the pairing group, the group must assume that if two people come together, they can only do so for sexual purposes. It is therefore natural that Freud should see the nature of the bond between individuals in a group as libidinous. In the group, the libidinous component in the bond is characteristic of the pairing group, but I think it has a different complexion in the dependent group and the fight-flight group Freud describes the commander-in-chief of the Church as Christ, but I would say that it is the Deity. Christ, or the Messiah, is the leader, not of the dependent group but of the pairing group. In psycho-analysis, regarded as a part of the pairing group, the Messiah, or Messianic idea, occupies a central position, and the bond between individuals is libidinous. The Messianic idea betrays itself in the supposition that the individual patient is worth the analyst's very considerable devotion; as also in the view, sometimes openly expressed, that as a result of psychoanalytic work a technique will be perfected that will, ultimately, save mankind. In short, I regard Freud's use of the term libido as correct only for one phase, though an important one, and feel the need for some more neutral term that will describe the tie on all basic-assumption levels. The tie in the work group, which I regard as being a sophisticated

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nature, is more aptly described by the word co-operation.

Freud's notion of the leader as one on whom the group depends, and from whose personality it derives its qualities, seems to me to derive from his view of identification as almost entirely a process of introjection by the ego; to me the leader is as much the creature of the basic assumption as any other member of the group, and this, I think, is to be expected if we envisage identification of the individual with the leader as depending not on introjection alone but on a simultaneous process of projective identification (**Melanie Klein, 1946**) as well. The leader, on the basic-assumption level, does not create the group by virtue of his fanatical adherence to an idea, but is rather an individual whose personality renders him peculiarly susceptible to the obliteration of individuality by the basic-assumption group's leadership requirements. The 'loss of individual distinctiveness' applies to the leader of the group as much as to anyone else—a fact that probably accounts for some of the posturing to which leading figures are prone.

Thus the leader in the fight-flight group, for example, appears to have a distinctive personality because his personality is of a kind that lends itself to exploitation by the group demand for a leader who requires of it only a capacity for fighting or for flight; the leader has no greater freedom to be himself than any other member of the group. It will be appreciated that this differs from Le Bon's idea that the leader must possess a strong and imposing will, and with Freud's idea that he corresponds to a hypnotist. Such power as he has derives from the fact that he has become, in common with every other member of the group, what Le Bon describes as 'an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will'. In short, he is leader by virtue of his capacity for instantaneous, involuntary (maybe voluntary too) combination with every other member of his group, and only differs from them in that, whatever his

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function in the work group, he is the incarnation of the basic-assumption-group leader.

Freud's view seems not to make explicit the dangerous possibilities that exist in the phenomenon of leadership. His view of the leader, and indeed all other views of which I am aware, is not easily reconciled with my experience of leadership as it emerges in practice. The leader of the work group at least has the merit of possessing contact with external reality, but no such qualification is required of the leader of the basic-assumption group. The usual description of the leader seems to be a mixture embodying various group phenomena, the characteristics of the work-group leader predominating. For reasons I have given, the work-group leader is either harmless through lack of influence with the group, or else a man whose grasp of reality is such that it carries authority. It is likely therefore that discussions of leadership coloured mostly by views of work-group-leader qualities will be optimistically tinged. My view of the basic-assumption-group leader does not rule out the possibility of identity with the work-group leader, but it allows for the existence of a leader apparently evoking the enthusiastic allegiance of the group, but devoid of contact with any reality other than the reality of the basic-assumption-group demands. When it is realized that this can mean that the group is being led by an individual whose qualification for the job is that his personality has been obliterated, an automaton, 'an individual who has lost his distinctiveness', but who yet is so suffused by the emotions of the basic-assumption group that he carries all the prestige one would like to believe was the especial perquisite of the work-group leader, it becomes possible to explain some of the disasters into which groups have been led by leaders whose qualifications for the post seem, when the emotions prevalent at their prime have died down, to be devoid of substance.

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Freud (1921, p. 45) says that panic is best studied in military groups. I have experienced panic with troops in action on two occasions, and have on several other occasions in small civilian groups had reason to think that the emotional experience bore a sufficiently close resemblance to my military experience to deserve the name panic. I think Freud is discussing the same phenomenon, though these experiences do not appear in all respects to bear out Freud's theories. McDougall's description of panic refers to an experience which I think is similar, in essentials, to my own and I am confirmed in this when he says, 'Other of the cruder, primary emotions may spread through a crowd in very similar fashion though the process is rarely so rapid and intense as in the case of fear' (**McDougall, 1920, p. 24**), and then describes in a footnote an instance he witnessed in Borneo of the almost instantaneous spread of anger through a crowd (*ibid*, p. 26). McDougall has thus brought very close together, though without making the connection, anger and fear, and thus supports my view that panic is an aspect of the fight-flight group. It is my contention that panic, flight, and uncontrolled attack are really the same. I am not acquainted with Nestroy's parody, quoted by **Freud (1921, p. 49)**, but taking the story as he gives it, I would agree that it could be taken as typifying panic, but I would say this: there can be no more absolute a way of leaving a battle than by dying. There is nothing in the story of panic flight following the death of the general, that we may regard as incompatible with fidelity to the fight-flight leader; he is followed even when dead, for his death is an act of leadership.

Panic does not arise in any situation unless it is one that might as easily have given rise to rage. The rage or fear are offered no readily available outlet: frustration, which is thus inescapable, cannot be tolerated because frustration requires awareness of the passage of time, and time is not a dimension

of basic-assumption phenomena. Flight offers an immediately available opportunity for expression of the emotion in the fight-flight group and therefore meets the demand for instantaneous satisfaction—therefore the group will fly. Alternatively, attack offers a similarly immediate outlet—then the group will fight. The fight-flight group will follow any leader (and, contrary to views hitherto expressed, retains its coherence in doing so) who will give such orders as license instantaneous flight or instantaneous attack. Provided that an individual in the group conforms to the limitations of the fight-flight leader, he will have no difficulty in turning a group from headlong flight to attack or from headlong attack to panic.

The stimulus for panic, or the rage that I consider to be interchangeable, must always be an event that falls outside the work-group functions of the group involved. That is to say, the degree of organization of the group is not a factor in panic unless the organization (which is, as I have said, a part of work-group function) has been evolved for coping with the specific external event responsible for the panic. In **Freud's (1921, p. 47)** example of a fire in a theatre or place of amusement, the work group is devoted to the watching of play but not to the witnessing of a conflagration, still less to the extinguishing of it. The essential point about organization is that it should be suitable both to the external aim of the group and to the manipulation of the basic assumption that such a pursuit is most calculated to evoke. Panic in an army is not produced by a military danger, though military danger is, in the nature of things, very likely to be present. It is not likely to be produced by any situation in which attack or flight are appropriate expressions of work group. If it appears to arise in such a situation it is because the actual cause is not observed.

It is clear that between the theories advanced by Freud

and those I have sketched out here there is a gap. It may appear to be more considerable than it is because of my deliberate use of a new terminology with which to clothe the apparatus of mechanisms that I think I have detected. It will be necessary to test this by looking at the group more from the standpoint of the individual. But, before I do this, I shall sum up by saying that Freud sees the group as a repetition of part-object relationships. It follows from this that groups would, in Freud's view, approximate to neurotic patterns of behaviour, whereas in my view they would approximate to the patterns of psychotic behaviour.

The society or group that is healthy shows its resemblance to the family group as Freud describes it. The more disturbed the group, the less it is likely to be understood on the basis of family patterns or neurotic behaviour as we know it in the individual.

This does not mean that I consider my descriptions apply only to sick groups. On the contrary, I very much doubt if any real therapy could result unless these psychotic patterns were laid bare with no matter what group. In some groups their existence is early discernible; in others, work has to be done before they become manifest. These groups resemble the analytic patient who appears much more ill after many months of analysis than he did before he had had any analysis at all.

The individual who attends a group for treatment is entitled to believe that he is going to experience something that will lead to his cure. Almost without exception—and the exceptions have themselves to be demonstrated as more apparent than real—patients are convinced that the group is no good and cannot cure them. It is something of a shock to them to find, at any rate when I am a member of the group, that what takes place is not something that allays these anxieties, but appears rather to be a detailed and painstaking

demonstration that their vague and ill-formulated suspicions and resentments about the group are based, as often as not, on only too substantial group attitudes towards them and their troubles. Their suspicions are well grounded; they are anchored, at one end at any rate, in what seems to be a perfectly genuine indifference to them, or worse still, hatred of them. For example: A woman is talking in a group consisting, on this occasion, of six people and myself. She complains of a difficulty about food, her fear of choking if she eats at a restaurant, and of her embarrassment at the presence, during a recent meal, of an attractive

woman at her table. 'I don't feel like that,' says Mr. A, and his remark is met by a murmur of sound from one or two others which could indicate that they were at one with him; could indicate it and does indicate it, but at the same time leaves them free to say, for this group had now become wily, if need arose, that they 'hadn't said anything'. The remainder looked as if the matter were of no interest or concern to them. If a patient spoke in analysis as the woman had spoken, it is clear that according to the state of her analysis the analyst would not expect to have any great difficulty in seeing that a number of interpretations were possible. I cannot see how any of these interpretations, which are based on years of psycho-analytic study of the pair, can possibly be regarded as appropriate to the group; either that, or we have to revise our ideas of what constitutes the analytic situation. In fact the interpretations I gave were concerned almost entirely with pointing out that the material that followed the woman's confidence to the group indicated the group's anxiety to repudiate that the woman's difficulty, whatever it was, was theirs, and furthermore that they were, in that respect, superior to the woman. I was then able to show that the reception the group had given to the woman's candour had now made it very difficult for any of the remainder of the group to speak, individually,

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of those other respects in which, in a burst of frankness, they were prepared to admit that they were 'inferior'. In short, it was not difficult to show that if a patient did go so far as to come to the group for help with a difficulty, what she got was an increase of feelings of inferiority, and a reinforcement of feelings of loneliness and lack of worth.

Now, this situation is not similar to that which obtains in an analysis when the analyst has succeeded in making overt unconscious fears and anxieties. In the instance that I have given, no interpretation was made that would elucidate for the woman the significance of her anxieties when eating in the presence of 'an attractive woman'. The series of interpretations that I gave could, in so far as they were successful, have made clear to her the disagreeable emotions associated with being the receptor in a group which is resorting freely to projective identification. I could have made clear to her that her 'meal' in the session was causing her embarrassment, and to some extent this was implicit in the interpretations I was giving to the group as a whole. But it seems fair to say that, from an analytic point of view, the woman is not getting a satisfactory interpretation, and is suffering an experience the discomfort of which is not intrinsic to her disability, but inheres in the fact that group treatment is the wrong treatment. There is, however, another possibility, and it is this: when this woman was speaking, although I had no reason to suppose and still do not suppose that she was anything but a case of psycho-neurosis, the whole manner in which she expressed herself reminded me strongly of the candour and coherence of unconscious expression that so often contrasts, in the psychotic, with the confusion that attends his attempts at rational communication. I can make my point clearer by saying that I believe that if this patient had spoken when in analysis with me as she did in the group, her intonation and manner would never have led me to doubt that the correct

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interpretation would be one appropriate to a neurotic disability; in the group I felt that manner and intonation alike indicated that her behaviour would be more accurately assessed if it were regarded as akin to the formulations of the psychotic. Regarded in this light I would say that she felt that there was a single object, called the group, that had been split up into pieces (the individual members of the group) by her eating, and that the belief that this was so reinforced guilty feelings that the emotions associated with being the receptor of projective identifications were the fault of her behaviour. These feelings of guilt again made it difficult for her to understand the part played in her emotions by the actions of the other members of the group.

So far I have considered the 'badness of the group' as it touches the patient trying to get treatment; we may now turn to consider this from the point of view of the members of the group who have been trying to achieve 'cure' by the splitting and projective mechanisms described by **Melanie Klein (1946)**. Not only have they divested themselves of any of the troubles of the woman patient, but, if this mechanism is to be effective, they have laid themselves open to the necessity for getting rid of any sense of responsibility towards the woman. This they do by splitting off good parts of their personality and placing them in the

analyst. In this way the 'treatment' that these individuals receive from the group is the achievement of a state of mind recognizably akin to the 'loss of individual distinctiveness', spoken of by Freud, on the one hand, and the depersonalization that we meet with in psychotics, on the other. At this point the group is in the state I have described as having the basic assumption of dependence dominant.

I shall not go further with the description of subsequent development in this group, except to mention one peculiarity of its subsequent behaviour very common to all kinds of

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group situations; subsequent communications were in terms of short interjections, long silences, sighs of boredom, movements of discomfort. This state of affairs in a group deserves close attention. The group appears to be capable of enduring almost endless periods of such conversation, or none at all. There are protests, but endurance of this monotony appears to be a lesser evil than action to end it. It is impossible to give all my reasons for thinking this phase of group behaviour to be significant. I shall content myself with saying that it is closely linked with the splitting and depersonalization mentioned above. I also believe it to be linked with feelings of depression probably in much the same way as maintenance of the schizoid position serves to suppress the depressive position (**Klein, 1946**).

Verbal Communication

In this state, when interpretations are made, they are disregarded. This disregard may be, as in psycho-analysis, more apparent than real; it may be that the interpretations are faulty and on that account inefficacious; or it may be that the basic assumptions are so dominant that any lead is ignored that does not fall within the limitations of those states. But even allowing for these possibilities, there is an unexplained residue. I have been forced to the conclusion that verbal exchange is a function of the work group. The more the group corresponds with the basic-assumption group the less it makes any rational use of verbal communication. Words serve as a vehicle for the communication of sound. **Melanie Klein (1930)** has stressed the importance of symbol formation in the development of the individual, and her discussion of the breakdown of a capacity for symbol formation appears to me to be relevant to the group state I am describing. The work group understands that particular use

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of symbols which is involved in communication; the basic-assumption group does not. I have heard it suggested that the 'language' of the basic-assumption group is primitive. I do not believe this to be true. It seems to me to be debased rather than primitive. Instead of developing language as a method of thought, the group uses an existing language as a mode of action. This 'simplified' method of communication has none of the vitality of primitive or early language. Its simplicity is degenerate and debased. Contrast to this state of affairs is provided by the occasions when a group, aware of the inadequacies of its vocabulary, tries to discuss and agree upon terms which they want to use in the group. In this instance, one might say one sees the evolution of a 'primitive' scientific method as a part of work-group function, but there is nothing debased about it. The 'language' of the basic-assumption group lacks the precision and scope that is conferred by a capacity for the formation and use of symbols: this aid to development is therefore missing, and stimuli that would ordinarily promote development have no effect. But one might well claim for the methods of communication that the group employs the title of Universal Linguistic, which Croce conferred on aesthetics. Every human group instantaneously understands every other human group, no matter how diverse its culture, language, and tradition, on the level of the basic assumptions.

As an exercise in the application of some of the theories I have been putting forward, I will instance the biblical account of the building of the Tower of Babel.¹ The myth brings together—rather in the way that a psycho-analytic patient's associations bring together—the following components:

¹ Genesis xi. 1-9. This account is a part of the so-called Jahvistic code and could therefore be regarded as an example of recording by a group with dependent basic assumption dominant when threatened by the emergence of the basic assumption of pairing.

a universal language; the building by the group of a tower which is felt by the Deity to be a menace to his position; a confounding of the universal language and a scattering abroad of the people on the face of the earth. What kind of event is embedded in this myth? I shall use my theories to interpret the myth as embodying an account of the development of language in a group with the dependent basic assumption dominant. The new development—it is worth remembering that Freud chose the development of language as an instance of group activity of high mental order—in itself demands further development in the group; this I take to be implicit in the symbolism of the tower, the building of which menaces the supremacy of the Deity. The idea that the tower would reach to Heaven introduces the element of Messianic hope which I regard as intrinsic to the pairing group. But a Messianic hope that is fulfilled violates the canon of the pairing basic assumption, and the group dissolves in schisms.

Melanie Klein (1930) has shown that the inability to form symbols is characteristic of certain individuals, I would extend this to include all individuals in their functions as members of the basic-assumption group.

Summary

Freud's view of the dynamics of the group seem to me to require supplementation rather than correction. There are many occasions when the apposite interpretation is one that draws attention to behaviour in the group that would be appropriate if it were a reaction to a family situation. In other words there is ample evidence for Freud's idea that the family group provides the basic pattern for all groups. If I have not stressed the evidence for this, it is because that view does not seem to me to go far enough. I doubt whether any

attempt to establish a group therapeutic procedure can be successful if it is limited to an investigation of mechanisms deriving from this source. I would go further; I think that the central position in group dynamics is occupied by the more primitive mechanisms that Melanie Klein has described as peculiar to the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. In other words I feel, but would not like to be challenged with my limited experience to prove, 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 the group.

It may be, of course, that this is an artefact produced by the frustration of the individual's desire to be alone with me in the group. I do not wish to minimize the importance of this, but in fact I do not believe that the phenomena I have witnessed are peculiar to a therapeutic group. All groups stimulate and at the same time frustrate the individuals composing them; for the individual is impelled to seek the satisfaction of his needs in his group and is at the same time inhibited in this aim by the primitive fears that the group arouses.

To recapitulate: any group of individuals met together for work shows work-group activity, that is, mental functioning designed to further the task in hand. Investigation shows that these aims are sometimes hindered, occasionally furthered, by emotional drives of obscure origin. A certain cohesion is given to these anomalous mental activities if it is assumed that emotionally the group acts as if it had certain basic assumptions about its aims. These basic assumptions, which appear to be fairly adequately adumbrated by three formulations, dependence, pairing, and fighting or flight, are, on further investigation, seen to displace each other, as if in response to some unexplained impulse. They appear, furthermore,

to have some common link, or, perhaps, even to be different aspects of each other. Further investigation shows that each basic assumption contains features that correspond so closely with extremely primitive part objects that sooner or later psychotic anxiety, appertaining to these primitive relationships, is released.

These anxieties, and the mechanisms peculiar to them, have been already displayed in psycho-analysis by Melanie Klein, and her descriptions tally well with the emotional states that find an outlet in mass action of the group in behaviour that seems to have coherence if it is considered to be the outcome of a basic assumption. Approached from the angle of sophisticated work-group activity, the basic assumptions appear to be the source of emotional drives to aims far different either from the overt task of the group or even from the tasks that would appear to be appropriate to Freud's view of the group as based on the family group. But approached from the angle of psychotic anxiety associated with phantasies of primitive part-object relationships, described by Melanie Klein and her co-workers, the basic-assumption phenomena appear far more to have the characteristics of defensive reactions to psychotic anxiety, and to be not so much at variance with Freud's views as supplementary to them. In my view, it is necessary to work through both the stresses that appertain to family patterns and the still more primitive anxieties of part-object relationships. In fact I consider the latter to contain the ultimate sources of all group behaviour.

If it is felt that the attempt to establish a group therapeutic procedure as a method for treating the individual is worth while, psycho-analysts would be well advised to find a new name for it. I cannot see that there is any scientific justification for describing work of the kind I have attempted as psycho-analysis—I have already given my reasons for this (pp. 178-82). In addition to this there is the fact, of which

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we are all aware, that 'bitter experience has taught us that resistance against the unconscious can be so subtle that it may distort the analytical findings and reinterpret them in support of some personal defence' (Jones, 1952) and therefore the term psycho-analysis should continue to be applied, in so far as we can control the situation, to the fundamental principles of psycho-analysis. There remains the question of what therapeutic value is to be attached to the procedure I have tried to describe. I do not think that the time has come to give a definite opinion, and I believe that there may be room for fully qualified psycho-analysts to carry on research into its value, possibly with groups composed of individuals who themselves are having or have had a psycho-analysis.

As a description of group dynamics, each individual is in a position to decide for himself whether the theories I have adumbrated give meaning to the phenomena which he, in the course of his daily life as a member of a group, can witness.