

---

**People's Fantasies  
in  
Group Situations**

---

**Harold N Boris**

# **People's Fantasies in Group Situations**

**Harold N. Boris**

e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *Sleights of Mind: One and Multiples of One* by Harold N. Boris

Copyright © 1994 by Harold N. Boris

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

## Table of Contents

### People's Fantasies in Group Situations

SESSION ONE

SESSION TWO

SESSION THREE

SESSION FOUR

SESSION FIVE

SESSIONS SIX TO TEN

SESSION ELEVEN

SESSION TWELVE

SESSION THIRTEEN

SESSION FOURTEEN

REFERENCES

# People's Fantasies in Group Situations

---

This was originally published as a chapter in a previous book, *Teaching Social Change* (Boris, Zinberg, and Boris 1976a). Though in a book previous even to that one, *The (Un)Examined Life* (Boris 1967) I had begun to try to formulate a theory about what happens in groups, I had not yet plucked myself free from thinking of the group as an entity instead of as a reification, indeed a fantasy. Even Bion, to whose work I was much indebted, had failed either to see or to note that the basic-most of the “Basic Assumptions” would have to be that there is such a thing as a group, out of (or in) which, only if assumed, could what he called the Basic Assumptions become activated.

(I sent Bion a version of this paper when it was almost incomprehensibly mired with one on “Hope” [1976b], and even when we met to go over things, neither of us referred to what almost immediately thereafter became obvious. But I wouldn't be surprised if that is how he worked.)

Once I was able to do away with the actuality of the group incarnate, it was possible to look into some of the functions the fantasy that there is such a thing as a group serves. It would—such is the “numbing sense of reality” of the group of which Bion wrote—be years later before it would dawn on me to wonder where the “genotype” for group formation might be held, a question that eventually took me to the notion of the pair.

This paper is also an attempt to understand the movement between the uses of the so-called inner and outer worlds of object relations relative to one another. I have not really followed up this idea of a field theory to the extent I think it deserves, though there is further elaboration of it in my *Passions of the Mind: Unheard Melodies* (1993).

---

In 1921 Freud presented his major essay on group psychology. Since he had not studied groups from the vantage point of the group psychotherapist, it was inevitable that his theory could only surmise the unconscious fantasies that are at the heart of psychoanalytic formulations. But, by the same token, it is all the more remarkable that Freud was able to replace the then current thinking concerning the group mind with dynamic and even genetic concepts and thereby lay the groundwork for a systematic psychoanalytic model. (For a detailed consideration of Freud's contributions, see Yalom's review, Yalom 1974.) Freud, moreover, never confined his treatment of any subject to one work. If taken together with formulations available, notably in his works, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), “On Narcissism” (1914), “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), his basic work on groups gains in dimension and richness.

In the approximately fifty years following Freud's essay, major additions have been made to group theory. Perhaps chief among these are Kurt Lewin's, whose work opened the way for further insight into the phenomenology

of groups, and H. S. Sullivan, whose treatment of the subject detailed the vital function of the group as introject in the establishment of the personality both phenomenologically and developmentally (Lewin 1948, Sullivan 1953).

Nor has there been a shortage of contributions from within the psychoanalytic group therapy movement itself. Redl (1945) and Buxbaum (1945) both presented important papers, and the work of Ezriel (1950), Slavson (1954-1972), Wolf and Schwartz (1962), Foulkes and Anthony (1965) and Scheidlinger (1968) has been helpful both to group theory and group therapy.<sup>1</sup> But among these it has been Bion who made the most searching study of groups; his 1961 work attempts a thoroughgoing formulation both of group dynamics and, ultimately, of the meaning and function of those dynamics, particularly in terms of Kleinian theories of early object relations and their vicissitudes—a formulation to which he has continued to add, as in his 1970 work.

Perhaps paradoxically, the very scope and wealth of these contributions inexorably puts each of them into question. Theory is derived from data and then goes on to elucidate the data from which it arose. But in the very act of elucidation, the data change, invalidating theory. If theory is not to consist of rumor—of theory quoting theory as if the latter were fact—then theory must periodically return afresh, even naively, to the data.

Although this is necessary for any theory, it is particularly necessary for psychoanalytic theories. For in psychoanalysis the data are largely not in evidence. They must be inferred—reconstructed from behavior that is as much calculated to conceal as reveal. The hypotheses which attend to the labyrinthine transformations that people use to make their unbearable experiences more tolerable are psychoanalysis' major clinical tool. Solecisms in inference, as Glover in particular showed, merely add to the patient's repertoire of available transfigurations (Glover 1955).

Accordingly when, with thanks to support from the Ford Foundation, we found ourselves with the opportunity for studying more than twenty groups formally, at the same time bringing to bear our own previous and concurrent work with a variety of other groups, we elected to go back to the essentials. The question we posed ourselves was: When in what they take to be a group situation, what possibilities do people generally imagine there to be?

The nature of this question accounts for the approach we have taken in writing up the answers. Rather than offering modifications of or additional accretions to the theoretical formulations of the last half century, we make our formulations in a way that seeks to be all of a piece. As much as possible we have sought to make plain the

inferential relationship our formulation bears to the data from which it is drawn. This process of thinking out loud, as it were, is designed to allow the reader to check our inferential derivations where need be. Some readers, for example, will find us seemingly neglectful of member-member relationships, transference or otherwise. They will want to examine closely why we have come to regard this as secondary or even tertiary among the possibilities people seem to see in group situations.

For much the same reason we have attempted not to transpose terms from previous theoretical treatments to our own inferences. - Instead we attempt to describe what we see. If the reader then says, "That is 'identification' of which they are speaking," we prefer this to having spoken of "identification," only to have the reader wonder whether we are here echoing Freud's or some other use of the term.

People in the groups we have studied speak of "making a group." By that they seem to mean finding or making manifest a good deal in common, each with the others. *Their* theory seems to be that there is such a thing as a group, and that a group may be contrived if people make evident much in common. The energy and persistence they show in making a group suggests, moreover, that a group is a very valuable thing to have.

At first blush there seems nothing very remarkable in that theory, held by the people we have studied. But if we venture to examine it more closely, it begins to appear rather more remarkable.

The first matter one notices is the extent to which the beliefs are shared. No one seems to challenge either the belief that there is such a thing as a group or the belief that the manifestation of things in common can possibly out-measure the differences of every sort and variety that, in actuality, exist among the people present.

That no one challenges these beliefs certainly bespeaks the fact that these beliefs are held in common. But that it takes more than these commonly held beliefs, as suggested by the efforts to make or find things in common, indicates that the degree to which things in common out-measure differences occupies their attention as well.

It seems, therefore, that a group exists as a potential state, which can be realized when the people comprising it find more in common than the differences that separate them.

This again seems commonplace—until we reckon more closely with the differences. These are of age, sex, marital status, occupation, background, temperament, physique, cast of mind—the list threatens to become endless.

What similarities, therefore, could possibly out-measure the differences? It is plain that actual similarities cannot out-measure the actual differences unless a collusive blind eye is turned to them. Similarity, we have to conclude, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholders: only insofar as all present elect to regard the fact that they are fellow somethings—e.g., human beings—as more important than their limitless differences, can a group, as the participants conceive of it, be said to exist.

If that is the case, the belief cannot be faulted: all present are human beings. Yet one senses that such a common denominator is not really what the people present have in mind. “Human being,” one senses, is too broad a category; it fails to distinguish them from all those who are also human beings but who are not to be regarded as “in” the group. Nor does such a category spare those present from laboring to make manifest additional things in common. We must conclude, therefore, that not only must a “group” have more in common than in difference but they must be more different from than similar to others not to be “included” in the “group.” For this latter dimension, “human beings” does not serve; yet the differentiations that must also be made manifest in order to distinguish who is to be regarded as “in” from those considered to be “outside” the group, threaten to encroach on the common denominator among those to be included. Once again, as artifice was required to take as evidence similarities and to overlook differences, so in establishing distinctions, those who wish to regard themselves as composing a group must contrive to take as evidence their differences from those outside the group, while ignoring the host of similarities which, by the same token, they share (e.g., all are human beings) with those to be excluded.

If this is so, we are obliged to regard the “group” as a number of people who are prepared to accept or contrive similarities, disregard differences, and accept the resulting perception as the truth. We, therefore, are obliged to regard the resulting “group” as an invention in both senses of that word.

To do so, however, leaves us, as would-be theorists of groups, with precious little to theorize about! As the theologian depends on the actuality of his God for the basis of the theology he writes, so the group theorist requires his group. And all we have left in the way of a group is aggregates of people collectively attempting to give substance to a fantasy each of them shares.

But suppose we take that phenomenon itself as our starting point, and attempt to understand what it is about the fantasy that so appeals to those who hold it. For surely what happens in groups is that people labor to actualize that fancy, through this means and that, in order, in the end, to claim benefit from its accomplishment. Why, what



benefit, and how they labor may, after all, be worth knowing, especially considering the ubiquity of people's beliefs in groups.

To begin, it seems that we must begin with fantasy itself. Fantasy, it is fairly plain, functions to enthrone a version of something in preference to the absence of that something or to its factual version. The very function of the imagination is inviting, in that the active and personal mind of the imaginer is necessary, whereas only his senses are required to know of things as they are or are not. And the product of the fantasy delights insofar as it replaces drear fact with versions more palatable. In both its manner and its matter, fantasy is king—indeed creator.

The group, people seem to believe, is something other than an aggregate of people, something that can be created of an aggregate, with a whole something more than the sum of its parts. And this belief, we have concluded, can only be established and supported through the exercise of fantasy.

That this very exercise of fantasy can be delightful is easy to see. Order comes from chaos, with but a flick of the mind's eye. A hundred different girls can be made a single "unit" by common costumes and lock-step dances. Life is simplified when numbers of discrete individuals, all different, can be subsumed into categories—black, white; middle-class, lower-class; normal, psychotic, whatever. But the first example differs from the second insofar as the girls must dress and dance alike, while to classify individuals into categories requires only the inventive art of the categorizer. What we need to focus on is not solipsistic fancy, but the collective actualization of shared fancy.

What beyond the self-molument pleasure of fantasy induces people collectively to deceive themselves into believing in groups? The leading idea concerning "groups" is that the people comprising them are more similar than otherwise. Must it not be that groups are invented as an antidote to the fact<sup>2</sup> of differences?

But though this inference seems logical, it seems, at the same time, unreasonable. *Vive la difference*, say the French, and indeed differences seems quite the nicest thing in the world: the frightened, hungry child::the comforting, providing mother; the ardent male::the attractive, eager woman; the bold contestant::his brave opponent. But when we notice that the pairings we have mentioned are all reciprocal, all complementary, we see that we are dealing only with "good" differences. What about other differences: the clinging child::the harassed and busy mother; the ardent male::the otherwise committed woman; the bold contestant::the overwhelming opponent? These differences are anything but complementary and reciprocal. Until and unless they are resolved, they will lead to a fight, a separation, or an otherwise painful relationship. The child may get spanked, sent to his room or scolded; the

male may become intolerably rapacious: the girl he covets may leave; the contestants may hurt each other too badly and one may be destroyed. Each member of the pair would no doubt wish first for a reciprocal relationship with the other; but failing this, each will wish to avoid the painful eventuality for which they may be heading. It is here, it seems, that “making a group” provides the alternative.

If that is indeed the case, one can see that Dick, the ardent lover, will consent to be just friends, that is, form a “group,” with Jane, only as a second resort. Jane, however, is far from willing because she has Tom, her differences from whom she finds complementary and, therefore, cherishes. If for Dick “grouping” with Jane helps avoid complete separation, a painful struggle or great jealousy, what does grouping with Dick do for Jane?

The most apparent answer is that Jane rather likes Dick, enjoys the interests and viewpoints they have in common, and even enjoys the affection he still maintains, if in modulated form for her. In fact, being a good friend, Dick encourages her in her love affair with Tom; sometimes, after talking with Dick, she feels blessedly free of the doubts that occasionally plague her about her relationship with Tom. Though she is sure her parents would like Tom, something in her wonders; then, too, she is sometimes frustrated by Tom’s difference in their lovemaking.

If we schematize these feelings of Jane’s, we see the following. Jane talks of “something in her” which she does not regard as identical with her self—that aspect of her which she experiences and describes as I, Jane. This “something in her” is “in” her, but not of her *self*. It is associated in some way with Jane’s parents. Yet neither is it identical with her parents. Nevertheless, this “something” causes that which Jane talks of as “I” and as her “self” to feel doubts. At the same time she—Jane’s I, self—feels very enthusiastic. Dick’s support somehow helps this; after their talks she feels only enthusiastic.

Let us call that something in Jane her conscience. Then there is her self Jane’s conscience, though not identical with her parents, is sometimes identified with them; likewise, though not identical with Jane’s self, her conscience can invade Jane’s self with doubts and discouragement. Dick, however, can influence these psychic “events.”

In like manner, Jane’s sexuality wants more satisfaction than Tom will afford “it.” Jane is undecided, at times, whether to identify her self with her sexuality against Tom or to take Tom’s side, as it were, against her sexuality. Here too Dick is of some help, reinforcing her—self’s I’s—determination to put her sexuality—it—away from her, and to accept Tom’s attitudes as hers—Jane’s self’s own—without feeling too unhappy.

So schematized, in deference to Jane's fantasy of being somehow in three parts—conscience, sexuality, and self—we see that Jane feels that she has things to contend with “within herself” Dick helps her contend with these “things” by getting them “out” of her “self,” though they remain in her somewhere. It is that Dick comes into her self and helps her repel the impingement of sexuality and conscience?

Clearly that is impossible in the realm of fact, but fantasy, as we have noted, reigns supreme. If Jane already has fantasies concerning a tripartite going on of things in her self, to reject the inference that she also has fantasies that she can take Dick inside her self would seem to swallow the camel while straining at the gnat. Let us, therefore, go the whole hog (as Jane does) and assume that in her imagination Dick's support and reinforcement are tantamount to having Dick enter the room of self and there, repel other figures. If we make this assumption, what comes clear is the great value of an external relationship of grouping for the I's—self's—internal relationships, much as a good alliance between one country and another could help both with not only their struggles with yet other countries, but with problematic factions within each.

But one can also see that Jane can be rather afraid of Dick as well. Suppose that rather than grouping with her I—self, Dick allies himself—takes a position in common—with Jane's conscience or her sexuality. The odds, which were so helpful to Jane's self, will certainly have changed. If Jane felt bad to begin with, Dick, were he to enter allegiance with Jane's conscience, “could” make Jane feel very bad indeed. Likewise, Jane, by coming around, with Dick's “help,” to feeling “at one” with Tom against her sexual wishes could, should Dick support the cause of her sexuality, feel quite at one with “it” and at odds with Tom.

Dick cannot, of course, effect these changes; any more than he could offer support to Jane as self, without the active collaboration of Jane's fantasies. But Jane, we are inferring, treats psychic “events,” internal reality interactions, as if they were somehow like physical events, external interactions between real, live people. Since this is the case, we can guess that when Jane, with help from an inner Dick, repudiates the voice of conscience, she herself will feel less bad; she will also feel more lonely. That is, she will respond to conscience as if it were a person, her mother, and her “estrangement” from this figure will make her feel lonely—quite as if she lost an actual person. No doubt this is why Jane often imagines that she has “something in her” and why she continues to imagine this, despite the unpleasantness of the doubts this fantasy imposes. Dick's affection is required to keep her from feeling too lonely for her conscience at those times when she has lost touch with it.

But in following Jane's experience, we have lost sight of Dick and his experiences with and of Jane.

Dick didn't altogether want to "group" with Jane: He preferred to celebrate their differences than to establish so much in common. On the other hand, neither did he want to quarrel with or to lose her. But her repudiation of him both frustrated Dick sexually and opened him to doubts about himself. Dick was thus in much the same boat as Jane, so that Jane's offer of friendship is helpful to Dick in the same way his is to her: Dick employs Jane to augment his self against fault-finding from his conscience and from unmannerly uprisings on the part of his sexuality. His "grouping" with Jane is brandished by Dick to offset pressures from both directions. In the same way, Dick will, as Jane was, be afraid of Jane's becoming identified with either his sexuality or his conscience. Indeed, were Jane to be a little too seductive, Dick's self will feel quite angry at her, nor will he take criticism from Jane, unless he *himself* agrees with it, at all gladly. Jane and he are to have much in common; differences between Jane and himself will not be welcome.

If, however, the alternative of "grouping" is invented to counteract problems of "internal" and "external" differences, it seems in one respect at least to be a solution to a nonproblem. The internal situation, as we have noted in passing, can only be regarded as a fantasy. Thus, it is all very well to infer that the imaginary merger of self and other in a "group" provides good augmentation to the self's struggle with conscience, but to infer that fails to account for why conscience is imagined in the first place.

But this we can do fairly easily by examining the reverse of the procedure by which conscience and self become fused as self by dint of an internal grouping. Under those circumstances, the fantasy seems to be: conscience and myself are one and the same. But though that fantasy seems to evoke a feeling of great well-being, sometimes indeed euphoria and elation, unless the self's relationship with conscience, which previously was based on difference, is replaced with a relationship based on difference with some other figure, a feeling of loneliness ensues. Conscience and self when differentiated give the illusion of an actual relationship.

That actual relationship, we can surmise, is modeled on one the person once had with some real external figure. But when it was real and external, it was, we must assume, also problematic in one of the ways we have been discussing. The choices were the usual (schematized) choices: endure, separate, fight, succumb, or group. Of these, grouping was the method of choice, and the individual then imagined himself to be at one with that other person. This, however, though it solved the problem posed by the distasteful nature of the other alternatives, proves not to

be a good antidote for loneliness. As a result, another choice is forced: resume the external relationship and conduct it in one of the other modalities—endurance, fighting, and so on—or disgorge the other person from the “self” and conduct the relationship, as if real, in imagination. Since, at a given time, the first of the two choices means jumping back from the frying pan into the fire, the other option has more appeal. The relationship is conducted as a differentiated one, but in fantasy. If a differentiated relationship can be termed an I-Other relationship—an I-Other relationship in reality is replaced by an I-Other relationship in fantasy.

Yet it is not quite an I-Other relationship either. For not all of the actual I-Other relationship need be represented internally, nor need all the I-plus Other-equals Me, which was the midstage of the devolution, be allocated to conscience.

The person who is to be imaginatively reconstructed and represented in a fantasied interior need not be assimilated wholesale. Just as Dick and Jane and Tom and Jane continue to conduct actual relationships in spaces all regard as external and yet at the same time each maintains figurative, inner relationships with the other inside,<sup>3</sup> so only aspects of the Other and only elements of the relationship need be taken in and moved about there.

The same appears to be the case for movements through internal boundaries. Jane may retain some of Dick for her “self” and assign some of him elsewhere. Similarly, she may take Tom’s point of view regarding sex and experience it as her own self’s view or conscience’s.

But it may well strike us that conscience is a word inadequate to describe these creations of fantasy. One objection to these terms is that they imply forbidding or critical functions, and this is neither accurate nor true. But the more serious issue is that they suggest something far too limited and unitary. In fact, people act as if they have a variety of Others represented internally and conduct many and varied relationships with them. Our own imaginations cannot be limited if we are to envision the fantasies other people have of the nature of their internal relationships. We are likely to be more accurate if we envision a state of affairs akin to a populous dream, indeed a series of dreams. The cast, if not quite “a cast of thousands,” is, neither, a single voice of conscience.

The separation of I from these internal Others is neither absolute nor resolute. Internal groupings take place much as external relationships flex and flux—and, indeed, in fashions complementary each (internal and external) to one another. For in creating an internal representation of an Other, a person creates something akin to the Sorcerer’s Apprentice, who, enlisted to solve one problem, lives on to create others. Thus, if the creation of a fantasy

relationship makes up for the loss of an actual one, that fantasied relationship may go on to prove a problematic one, necessitating external “grouping” to cope with *it*. This we may imagine was the case for Jane, who created “something (someone) in her” who she imagined could love her under certain circumstances, but which also, it turned out, could make her feel quite bad under others. Dick helped with this, by augmenting her self in support of her relationship with Tom. But what if Dick should leave? Jane might continue to “retain” Dick in memory and self to continue as an antidote to that someone in her. But what if, in the end, Jane should change her mind (self) about Tom? Now she will have inner-Dick to contend with as a new source of doubt. Will she be able to part with Dick altogether, sacrificing the good Dick whose approval of Tom makes him now a bad Dick, or in hoping to hold on to the good Dick, will she have to offset the bad Dick with a new grouping with someone else?

Parsed out this way, it can be readily seen that Jane’s original inability to tolerate and endure one of her actual relationships led first to her replacement of that relationship, or aspects of it, with a fantasied grouping in and with her self, and then to a fantasied relationship based on greater differentiation placed within her conscience. These steps, in turn, led to others—each taken out of the same motivation: to dilute suffering. With each maneuver, Jane hopes to preserve the hope that her hopes of the original relationship can come true, so that with each maneuver Jane replaces a bit of the facts of the original relationship with an additional bit of fiction.

Much as one “group” may, while opposing another, challenge everything that other group stands for or contains, but never doubt that the other is a group, so Dick, for his own purpose, may come to oppose Jane in every way but that of challenging the processes of fantasy she uses. His use of them requires that Jane remain unconscious of using them herself; together, therefore, they collude to remain unaware of their substitution of a process of fantasy for processes by which facts are maintained.

Such a collusive endeavor is evident in the very phenomenon with which we began this essay into theory. All those present in the groups we studied believed in grouping: none challenged that belief. The people, indeed, used the classical hiding place for their belief; they put the belief in that most casual of places: the belief went without saying. Thereafter, the only matters that preoccupied the participants were tactical in nature. The problem was how to assure that others become one with the self and not with any of the internal others to which each participant plays host.

The hope attached to this, we have already analyzed: augment the self vis-à-vis internal representations of

differentiated others. This means that others deemed similar are to be assimilated into the self. But in the groups we have studied, there is a “leader” present, and with this we come upon a new dimension. Not only does each participant’s self want augmentation vis-à-vis internal figures, each wants augmentation in respect to the external figure of the differentiated leader. Since the leader is external, it is as if assimilating others into the self is not the useful thing; each person’s self must be attributed to some external locus.

The participants, accordingly, reinvent and then invoke the concept of “the group.” And they reinvent and invoke a trend that is the reverse of the ones Dick and Jane employed, of taking in; instead, they project their selves out and into the group. The colloquial word they use for this is being “open.” Open, in this connection, means not open *to* ideas or suggestions or anything else external, but open so that what is within can issue *forth*. The fantasy is that the psychic, mental, or personal domain behaves analogically with the physical self, and as such contains ingresses and egresses through which, when “open,” substances capable of “making” a group can pass. It is irrelevant to our present purposes, though not to the analysis of the fantasies of specific people who feel they comprise groups, to consider which of these apertures they have in mind. It is important only to note the fantasy itself, that the self, or parts of what it contains, can exit from within boundaries attributed to the person and fill up a space around which a boundary separating “our” from other groups is drawn.

Once there, commingled with the issuances of other “members” it creates an entity called the group. This entity is in one sense an objective correlative of the self but it is, in another respect, taken to be the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, as an army is more than the soldiers, a country more than its people, or a team more than its players.

Once this entity is formed, it rather than its elements can (people seem to believe) be reassimilated into the self, where far more than Dick could to Jane or Jane to Dick it can augment the self. Part of this increment or effect appears to have to do with numbers. “One for all and all for one” is better the more there are to the “all.” But numbers are probably no more than one expression of magnitude, another one of which is size. The functional aspect of numbers is that, as for the Lilliputians, numerical strength can measure well in respect to physical size. If the inner or outer other is deemed to be sizable, numbers appear to have as much symbolic value as, in some circumstances, they have literal value—one more instance of metaphorical fantasy.

But the now-created group is also believed to have great force in respect to the external object of the group’s

interests—the “leader,” or whatever other Other. Jane was not only able to deal better with that “something in her” thanks to her grouping with Dick, but, we should not be surprised to hear, she might have hoped to deal better with Tom. This, partly out of the increased confidence she gained within but partly too because Tom might have been more impressed by Dick and Jane together—two against one—than by Jane alone.

The “group” then hopes and trusts that its hope for a differentiated and reciprocal relationship with the Other they have selected will be the more realizable thanks to their having become a group. The fantasy is that they are now collectively worthy—but, failing that, they are now substantial enough to avoid having to endure, succumb, or separate—and if it comes to a struggle, they are strong enough to compel the Other into a reciprocal relationship. Their worthiness, of course, comes from the group’s ability to induce respect and good treatment from the inner others.

So cherished and believed is this fantasy, and all the subsidiary fancies that go into its making, that should it prove to be fallacious, the whole edifice of fantasy threatens to collapse, leaving behind, like so much rubble, only absolute hopelessness. The only remaining fantasy is that the external other, the leader, has so much more substance than the group that he is awesome indeed. A contagious—or shared—panic results, and separation or flight or a frozen succumbing seems finally the only alternative remaining.

But if that response is one measure of the hope vested in the group, another measure is the degree to which, short of such an emergency, the hope remains undaunted; for, failing an adequate response from the object of the group’s hopes—the Other—the group can find other objects. It can, for example, divide into two “subgroups,” each of which can work out an Other relationship with one another. Such subgrouping is believed to preserve the grouping from “disintegrating” into a series of Other relationships, with the affiliate loss of self augmentation as a source of effect on inner or external others. And it provides a temporary measure against losing the relationship the participants hope still to find with the original Other. That all participants share in the belief in and contriving of this strategy indicates that the grouping, effected by holding things in common, remains intact, despite appearances of subgrouping.

Other tactics are similar in nature and, as such, are important more in respect to the fantasy they attempt to realize than in the precise devices employed, for which ingenuity is the only limitation. That fantasy, as we have seen, is in two parts, the first of which relates to the object or objective of the group’s interests, the other of which to



the hopes of the individuals comprising the grouping. The first seeks satisfactions based on reciprocal differences and related to persons deemed to be different and hence outside the perimeter of the group. The second seeks self or group-augmentation to come from within the group.

The two sources of gratification are, people hope, susceptible of working complementarily, but it turns out that there is a conflict between them. The conflict is in one sense that which Jane faced with Tom. If she were to feel at one with Tom, she had to side with him against her sexuality, striking a compromise between satisfactions requiring difference and those requiring commonality. The hope of people in respect to the group is that this will not be necessary. The belief is that by splitting the two kinds of satisfactions all the way apart and assigning the fulfillment of one sort to the group and the other to the person who is deemed different, both sorts of satisfaction can be received without the need to diminish either by compromising. Were this hope to work out, there would be no need for choice and hence no conflict (Boris 1971).

But hopes can remain hopes only insofar as they remain unfulfilled, whereas satisfactions cannot be realized unless desires are fulfilled. Much as the group might wish it to be otherwise, there is an irreconcilable conflict between hopes and satisfactions. Satisfactions suborn and weaken hope by virtue of the immediate pleasures they afford, tempting people to be satisfied with feeling satisfied. Hopes require that the potential be better than the actual: to feel “Stay, moment, thou art so fair” is to settle for the actual.

Faced with satisfactions, the group escalates its hopes; in the face of frustrations, the group can preserve its hopes. When the self is so augmented, as by grouping it is imagined to be, hopes once abandoned appear to be reassumed, and hope becomes boundless. The hatred of succumbing is experienced with great force, unimpeded by the effective “presence” of inner or external others. When grouped, people feel themselves to be able to begin as if for the first time—to begin again with all the mourning and reconciliations they have gone through, all the enduring and suffering, set aside. This hope—that one may triumph over those who challenged one’s proposals to treat one’s hopes as convictions and so made cowardly one’s courage—is a function of people’s belief in the power of the group to still others.

The concept of satisfaction based on differences is more familiar to us, partly because psychoanalytic thinking has focused more on it. But some consideration might, nevertheless, prove useful.

We have seen that from time to time people feel it is both necessary and possible to rid themselves of certain

sorts of experience. One of these experiences is that of desire. When experienced, desire can become transformed into satisfaction and fulfillment, but it can also shade into tension, frustration, and deprivation, all of which may prove exceedingly frightening and painful. Since the painful consequences of desire are thought to hinge upon desire itself, people may be tempted to rid themselves of desire.

Desire, however, is extraordinarily difficult to be got rid of, rooted as it is in the appetitive and sensual nature of the organism. But the experiencing of desire is something else again; people feel that they can get rid of the experiencing of desire or, failing that, their knowledge of their experiencing of desire, providing only that a place be found for it.

Only imagination limits the number, variety, or activity of the places created or found. Equally, only imagination limits the fashion by which people feel the disgorging of desire or the experiencing of desire can be accomplished.

A desire to bite the breast, for example, may be dealt with in the following ways. For placing the desire, the baby, let us say a boy, may divide himself into two: a self that does not experience a desire to bite and a not-self that does. The self will be organized to remain in ignorance of this not-self. The not-self may be located in a part of his body, for example, his penis. Since location of the desire takes place not only in space but can change in time, later the penis, when it becomes a more important space to the growing child, may no longer serve as a useful vessel for urges to bite. The urge to bite may then be reassigned elsewhere—to the breast itself, to someone else's mouth, e.g., a dog's, to someone else's penis, e.g., a snake, or to the vagina. Once a place has been found, the urge to bite may be desired to continue unabated or to be tamed by its new host in ways one could not oneself tame it. The new host may be assumed to have the desire in reverse, now desiring one, as if one had now become the breast. Or the new host may be assumed to want to free himself of the desire attributed to him or her by insinuating it back into one. Under these circumstances, one may well feel that prudence dictates either the conversion of the desire into its opposite or avoidance of the host currently containing the desire. Thus when the new repository of the desire is someone, or part of someone, other than a part of one's person, that someone is transformed by the addition of the desire. The Other one dealt with previously, for example, now has a breast that wants to bite one. The previous relationship that obtained will be dramatically changed, and this will prove fateful for the conversion of an actual I-Other relationship into an "interior" one. The Other with which one conducts either the actual relationship or the relationship in fancy will no longer be the actual Other but an Other transformed by the attribution or subtraction of

characteristics of desire.

These fancies, concerning where and how desire can be reallocated, are often made before the culture has been able to make its recommendations—as, for example, when the baby is quite young. Nevertheless, the mother who believes the worst concerning the dangers inherent in the breast (or bottle) may be capable of stimulating or reinforcing an infant's disposition to use the breast as a vessel for wishes whose authorship he wishes to disclaim. One mother nurses baby, offering the breast. Baby roots for the nipple in a series of head-ducking movements. Upon connecting, he sucks vigorously. Mother sees baby's nose is pressed close against her breast. She retracts the breast which, as it happens, withdraws the nipple. Baby, rooting, seeks the nipple. The same series of events ensues. Finally, upon the latest loss of the nipple, baby refuses to suckle. As mother, leaning toward baby, brings the nipple to him, he turns away crying. The desire has passed, as it were, from baby to breast.

But the nature of these fancies may prove to be idiosyncratic with respect to the prevailing culture. The reprocessing of experience any one individual makes may be unconsonant with the processing or revisions others prefer. Insofar as the success of the operations on experience require secrecy, so that one may not find what one has got rid of, the existence of several versions of experience threatens the security of each one's version. Pluralism or relativism are in these circumstances endangering. People are offered alternative beliefs instead, in order that all may reach consensus, absolutism, and universals. Individuals may find it convenient to replace an idiosyncratic allocation of desire—from one's own mouth to mother's breast—with a culturally "validated" assignment—from our mouths to the enemies' mouths. Even if an individual does not redesign experience to obtain greater consonance with the culture (though if the culture is a breast that bites, he may feel it wiser to do so than not), he will at minimum feel tempted to borrow from the culture the fictions with which he replaces those experiential facts which he has found too painful.

That is, under simple sorts of exchanges, as between breast and mouth, the only change is in who desires. But this way of coping with desire may not work very well. Desire may not be so easily got rid of: indeed desire is quite difficult to get rid of. Easier to be got rid of is the knowledge about one's desire. Therefore, knowledge rather than desire is the first casualty in the struggle to revise experience. Knowledge can be denied, forgotten, banished. But in that case it leaves a space where it once was. That negative ("not this") space, from which experience or fact has been subtracted, functions better if filled with a fiction ("not this but that"). Since the fact may be remembered, triggered to recollection by some associational shard, or relearned from subsequent experience, the substitution of

fiction for fact helps more than the simple absence of knowledge can. It further helps if the fact that a fact has been got rid of is also forgotten, and it helps even more if to fill the space left by that now forgotten item the fiction that what is “so”—the case—instead was always “so.” That “so-ness” is even more invulnerable to the testimony of fact if other people can be induced to attest to it—at least in words, preferably in actions. Thus if many agree that breasts desire mouths and mothers devour babies, the “fact” that the mouth contains no desire seems truer as a result. If further, the mother/breast can be induced to devour/desire the mouth/child, the desire may be located without question. Mothers do desire their children as breasts do “desire” being suckled: these facts, however, are employed untruthfully to sustain a fiction. Mothers with extraordinary desire for their children may thereby assist their children in the latter’s efforts to deny their own desires for their mothers; the *quid pro quo* in which the mothers’ desires are linked to the children’s rather than to others’ (the mothers’ own mothers, for example) suggests the complicity possible between one person’s need not to know and another’s. The management of desire and the acknowledgment of desire is a vital activity both in the formation of “groups” and the use of group “membership.”

The concept of hope may also require further exposition.<sup>4</sup> As we contemplate people’s fantasies concerning grouping, we gain the impression that people are Platonists: they act and react as if there were an ideal to which all that is real only approximates. It is difficult to account for this conviction. Some people experience the ideal as if it were something to return to—a Paradise Lost—and some theories have it that such a conviction implies a wish to return to such early times of fulfillment as infancy or the womb. This might be a tenable explanation were there certain evidence that the womb is remembered or that infancy was ideal, but there is no certainty about the first and some certainty that infancy is something less than ideal. Other people experience the hope as one toward which to go forward—Paradise gained. Were there certainty about a heavenly afterlife, this too might be explicable, but once again the ideal is located forward of present by people who do not believe in an afterlife of any sort.

Some theories have it that since the real is so disappointing, people comfort themselves with an ideal, as if to say: “There must be something better than this!” But this leaves over the question of what the disappointing reality is *compared with*. An answer for this has, however, been offered—one’s own experience is compared with what *others enjoy*. Yet those “others” may neither enjoy nor feel they enjoy more than those who compare themselves with them enjoy. If one supposes a misperception, uncorrected, nevertheless supplies the comparative standard, such a reply does not account for why the overestimation takes place.

Once arguments based on experience fail, it becomes tempting to replace the Nurture thesis with a Nature

thesis: there is something inborn or inherited, something in a racial unconscious, perhaps. Ethologists have added to our understanding of in-built readinensses or reflexes—showing that much as a newborn duckling will freeze at an overhead shadow, so does the newborn infant turn his mouth to a pressure on his cheek—and it is conceivable that there is an inborn expectation of good things and bad.

This thesis, which requires a mental representation, a thought, or picture of that ideal good and bad thing, to be conjured or congenitally “remembered” if it is to be a psychological theory, competes for credibility with theories that rest on creativity. Such a theory might argue that people invent an ideal much as they invent anything else by making an inductive leap from the experienced to the possible. A theory such as this is akin to structural theories in anthropology and linguistics, and parallels *gestalt* theories in psychology, in imputing, as it does, an inborn readiness to depart from experience and construct something new or different, which at the same time is universal in the sense that the readiness itself is both universal and limited.

Whatever the explanation, it does appear that people imagine ideal versions of experience and that these versions hold claim on their activities by virtue of the hopes invested in these ideals. And whatever the origins of this idealizing process, it also seems that experiences are ransacked in order both to provide evidence for the ideals and to buttress or insulate the hopes invested in the ideals against erosion by the continuing presence of perceptual-sensory reality. Thus people may choose one instance here and another there, overlooking contrary or modifying examples, in order to fuel their hopes and reinforce their ideals.

Is the belief in groups a reincarnation of such an ideal? Our own inference is: Yes. People appear to contrast the group with the differentiated object of their desires, assigning to the object the function of providing to them what they want and lack, while to the group they assign their hopes of having (rather than needing) and being (rather than becoming). The group, we have remarked, is an empty potential which people imagine they can fill. Once imagined, hence, presumably, filled, the group is experienced as if it were an entity, present, palpable, sufficient, as if so many fractions have made an integer. The group then appears to be a manifestation of completeness. People feel capable of being both contained by the group, as within something like a circling embrace, and yet having—containing—within the group a sense of fullness and plenty. It is as if, in the group, people at once contain bounty and are contained by it: they have, they are. Or, at least, this is the ideal and the hope.

But the presence of the group’s object, the Other, appears to stimulate longings and, in stimulating longings,

puts into question the fantasy of being complete and replete; such a presence jeopardizes hope. Thus, no matter how fulfilling the object (indeed the more fulfilling the more so), the more the object becomes a source of envy: he or she, containing what the group hopes to contain and be contained by, appears better to approximate the group's hope of being replete and complete than does the group itself.

We must conclude, therefore, that the group's ideal is to refuse the differentiated object in both meanings of the word. It wishes to re-fuse with that object ("fuse once more")—to contain it and to be contained by it—and thereby to refuse benefits the group might receive were the person seen as different and separate from the group. This ideal bespeaks a hope that a grouping can supply the wherewithal necessary to realize the hope that individual frailty cannot itself fulfill.

If in the psychology of individuals investments of hope and pleasure in the self take over when receipts from others fall short, in the psychology of people's theories about grouping, transactions with "others" only take over when investments in the self prove insufficiently fulfilling. Grouping represents an attempt to supersede needing others and to make those others superfluous.

If our inferences concerning people's fantasies about groups are approximately correct, we should expect to find that their behavior in situations—which they take to be group situations—follows identifiable patterns expressive of these fantasies.

Chief among these patterns should be those expressive of the fundamental duality of hope versus desire. That is, we should expect to see behavior primarily motivated by hope and behavior primarily motivated by desire, with oscillations between these two.

Behavior governed by hope will find fantasies that the group is replete and complete being expressed through self-fulfilling activity and an indifference to or scorn of what the group's object has to offer. If we term that object the Other and for convenience's sake place that Other vis-à-vis the group as its eucharistic leader, we will expect to find the group going on about its business as if that Other, the leader, had nothing of value to offer. Instead, the group will find sufficiency and value preferable in simply *being*, or *failing* that, in engendering experiences for itself.

If the fantasy of people who take themselves to be members of groups is that collectively they embody the be-all-and-end-all of things, they act as if their ability to enjoy and sustain that fantasy is subject to two sources of

jeopardy. One consists in the emergence of desire in the members; desire, since it forces an acknowledgement of the desirability of someone or something outside the group, routs the hope that the group contains all that is necessary. The second blow to that hopeful fantasy comes about insofar as the “group” is not desired by others; for if the group embodies all that is desirable, how is it that others do not desire the group?

Although the threats are from different sources, they bear a relationship to one another. If, in the first instance, the members wish to “rid” themselves of the stirrings of desire, they can the more easily remain oblivious of their desires by attending to whatever desire may be evinced by others, especially by that other who might otherwise be the object of their desires. Similarly, to be desired can satisfy hope sufficiently so that desire can be the better resisted. The corollary to these is that when the potential object of the “group’s” desires fails to desire the “group,” the members experience that other as containing more and better of what they hoped to embody, which then stimulates intense desire, while shattering hope.

A good deal of activity, accordingly, will be directed to preventing any member from looking to an Other, especially that Other who is most easily available and, as such, represents the greatest temptation to abandon a “We-Us” position for a “We-Other,” namely, the leader. If the group cannot prevent this looking-to-an-Other, it will try to substitute itself for that Other. One or more members will be stimulated to try to provide the supplies or services the straying member or members seek. Subgrouping is thus one alternative by which to maintain hope within the group.

Failing that, the group will attempt to influence the doubting Thomas to look beyond the leader to some other Other. God may serve this purpose; historically, the belief in God has made people relatively immune to the demands or delights of Caesar. But whatever the incarnation of the Other, it will be offered as a palliative, a promise, not a remedy with any actuality or substance. Its offer will be designed to hold the members’ hopes in the group by placating them with hopes sufficient to temper their desires.

If this measure also fails to enshrine hope above desire, the object of the errant members’ desires will be denigrated and denuded of value and the implication will be plain that this fate, akin to wearing the scarlet letter, awaits the member who strays toward that Other.

At the same time the value of what the group contains and is contained by will be escalated. Great value will be found in people’s silent thoughts and fantasies, other activities or engagements, relationships with other Others.

Failing all of this, the group will feel depressed, as if hated and persecuted by the inner Others over which they now imagine they have also failed to triumph. This state of affairs will reveal itself in apathetic, dispirited behavior.

At this point, desire is likely to threaten to outweigh hope, for all of the group is feeling quite hopeless. Where previously it was preoccupied with the leader, now it becomes occupied with him. But what it wants from the leader is a restoration of hope, not gratification of its desires. The group wishes the leader will take in what it is and has been, and then offer to the group, as might an adept portrait artist to his subject, a talented conductor to a composer, a version of itself that restores its flagging hopes. It wants to be made good and nice and sufficient. The leader is thus to be employed as a Mosaic or instrumental leader; the group is not ready to concede to him possibilities of being a eucharistic leader.

Under the pressure of these wishes and the now rampant criticism from the inner Others, the group is prepared to begin weeding out its less than ideal members. This eugenic preoccupation may begin with efforts to convert members to the ideal, but can end with attempts to “purify” the species. Inquisitions, witch hunts, and exactions of good faith will precede, accompany, and follow the effort to have the new Mosaic leader restore the group to its former glory.

The group will, however, feel frightened of the leader: it has tried to repudiate him in the past and still wishes to do so. And it now wishes to have the leader come “into” the group, away from his Other position into a prime-ministerial position. This is not an intent of outright destruction, but it is an attempt to deprive the leader of his actual position by making him into an inner Other whom the group can use at its pleasure or group with.

None of these efforts are ever wholly renounced, but if they do not succeed, they become latent to, yet modifying of, the preeminence of desire. For now desire becomes paramount, and the group becomes frankly occupied with the task of winning gratification from its Other.

The experience of desire brings with it either envy or jealousy—in either case, rivalry. The group wants gratification, wants the leader to provide it, but continues to want to have, possess, and control the Other they now acknowledge to contain or be contained by the gratification they want. As such, they view themselves at odds either with the leader’s autonomy over those parts of him (or her) they covet or in competition with whomever they imagine the leader prefers to provide these to. Since these realizations go hand-in-hand with the acknowledgment of desire, hatred and longing go hand-in-hand as well. The accompanying hatred arouses guilt, fears of retaliation, fears



for the Other's safety and well-being, and beyond that fears for what the group desires from the Other. Insofar as these fears prove to be unfounded, the group will feel much relieved, but the sense of relief will be set against the group's realization of its impotence and helplessness. This latter realization will further erode the group's hopes of itself, and the group may need once more attempt to buoy up its hopes even at the expense of its desires.

To avoid this contingency, the group goes about attempting to influence its object into requiring its desires in so ample a measure that gratitude will supplant envy and satiety will outmatch jealousy. But the specific desires of each individual will be as different as each individual is from the others. In mobilizing to collectively address the leader-Other in respect to desire, the members of the group must compose their desires into commonality. This process becomes their first priority.

Next they must compose the means by which their ends are to be fulfilled. This involves, among other things, reconciling each of the others, and weighing the outcome of these deliberations in terms of each person's theory concerning what will influence the leader-Other. So formidable is this task that the absolute consensus for which the group strives is not easily, if ever, achieved. If it is not achieved, the united front the group has hoped to present to the leader-Other and their inner Others is weakened. And this, in turn, may require a scaling down of the most ardent desires and boldest means. Scaled down, the original intentions are frustrated, and the frustration gives rise to efforts on the part of the members to convert each other from a status too like either the leader of the inner Others to one identical with the group "self." These efforts also need to precede, if not the first attempt at gaining satisfactions, then the second, third, and fourth.

But even if the participants can gain consensus on ends and means, and even if they can achieve the satisfaction of their more urgent desires, this satisfaction will be less than they hoped because their hopes of grouping are so extravagant. So once more the group will feel torn between hope and desires, and once more it may return to a quest after hope in preference to desire.

Assuming such a return to behavior governed by hope—indeed assuming a series of such oscillations—the group may, in time, return to desire. With that return, the group will have to make a choice between certain of its hopes, for example, its hopes for omnipotence vis-à-vis the Other or the hope for longing unaccompanied by hatred, fear, or guilt. Yet even if it manages these renunciations, it will be confronted with the probability that the very pleasures for which it abandoned its hopes and ideals will prove themselves to be less engaging than they wished

and, in their wishes, believed.

That realization can be met either by modifying the belief or by an increase of envy, jealousy, and hatred. When the group adopts the former stance, it will suffer the very jeopardy of hope out of which it came to believe in the group. But, perhaps, by now the capacity to suffer both the abandonment of hope and the pain of absent pleasures will have increased the group's willingness to take pleasure in those desires that are gratifiable and gratified. If so, there will be fewer oscillations of shorter duration and lessened pendularity. When this develops, there is less of a wish to replace actual Others with inner representations, and consequently a diminished need to use grouping as an antidote to problems with inner Others.

With the need for grouping vis-à-vis inner Others reduced, grouping in respect to actual, external Others can proceed in ways more appropriate to the actual requirements of the situation. Greater differentiations can now "take place"—differences can be acknowledged—between members of the same group, and divisions of labor based on those differences can be employed. These divisions, accompanied by greater autonomy for each of the participants relative to others, serve factually to enhance the ability of the several to pursue their related (probably no longer identical) objectives. For examples of how these conflicts between hope and desire and envy and satisfaction are made manifest by a group, we turn to the rendition of a group with which one of us worked. The people comprising the group are psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers, all in training at a major hospital. A "group experience" has been deemed by the training faculty to be a useful part of their training.

## SESSION ONE

People assemble, greet each other, and make small talk until what they seem to feel are enough people to begin with have arrived. At this point, they fall silent and look toward the "leader," who is the only stranger present.

Since the leader also remains silent, the participants exchange looks. One, Dr. D., wears a look expressing something like amusement, skepticism, and annoyance. He looks at the others with particular intensity and frequency. In time most look mostly at him. He then speaks.

*Dr. D.:* (to the leader): You didn't introduce yourself. Am I correct in assuming you are \_\_\_\_\_, our leader?

*Leader:* I am \_\_\_\_\_.

*Dr. D.:* May we ask what the purpose of this seminar or group, or whatever it is, is?

*Leader:* I don't know.

*Dr. D. (to the others):* I give up. Is he kidding?

The question, "Is he kidding?", becomes a source of discussion. Various theories are put forth until most people seem to agree that the "leader" conducts groups this way, which is good, since this way enables people to make of the experience what they want.

However, though this conclusion would seem to open the way to making the experience whatever they want, everyone now becomes silent, looking, at the same time, rather gloomy. After a while, Dr. D. once more searches faces and, when people look at him, speaks.

*Dr. D.:* What sort of group do we want? Speaking for myself I want a group where I can be open. I want to get to know you all and I want you to get to know me.

Everyone lists reasons for wanting exactly such a group. The discussion is fairly animated. But then someone asks: What about him (referring to the leader)?

*Dr. D.:* I don't know. He can join us if he wants, or not. It's up to him.

Everyone seems to approve of this view of matters, yet no one speaks. After some minutes of silence, the "leader" says: It seems that no one can take me—or leave me alone.

This remark appears to have the effect of renewing the discussion concerning the leader's role in the open group everyone has said he wants. The discussion is inconclusive.

## SESSION TWO

The people present for Session One assemble, but a newcomer is present. Dr. D. attempts to "fill in" the newcomer, orienting him to the open group idea. The newcomer resists the implication that he is to cooperate with

the “decisions” taken last session. The rest of the session is spent in alternations between furious attacks on the newcomer and efforts to ignore him, which efforts, however, fail to find the group going on with their wish to be open with each other.

The leader remarks that the newcomer represents himself

### **SESSION THREE**

Session Three is a close relative of Session Two.

### **SESSION FOUR**

Several people are late. When they arrive, the others take up the issue of lateness. After much discussion, all agree to be on time since that will facilitate openness. This settled, the group falls silent. The leader observes that the group still cannot fulfill its hopes of having a fine, open group despite the issue of lateness being settled. He suggests that the group is still preoccupied with himself. This suggestion is actively denied by Dr. D. and others, but not by all others. Dr. D., noticing this, polls those who have remained silent. One or two “admit” to feeling that the leader’s place in the scheme of things still remains a source of irresolution. Silence ensues. Then Dr. B. says that the rule concerning promptness bothers her. Rules don’t enhance her own willingness to be open. She proposes the group be a place where everyone does his or her own thing. Everyone agrees this will make an ideal group.

### **SESSION FIVE**

Dr. L. asks the leader if this is his last meeting before vacation. The leader wonders why Dr. L., who knows it is, asks. Dr. L. replies he doesn’t know why he asks, just curious. Then he asks where the leader is going. The leader suggests it is the belief of Dr. L. and others that friendliness would assist the group in some way and that people present feel now that the leader is going away they can afford to be interested in him.

These remarks infuriate several of the participants who say that the leader is making too much of himself. After several comments of this sort are made to the leader (who remarks that it appears he must not enjoy any ideas that he might be of some importance to those present), someone suggests that the group continue to meet in the leader’s absence. All agree, though some express the reservation that the leader will not know what happened. Dr. L. replies

that if the leader wants to know, he doesn't have to go on holiday.

## SESSIONS SIX TO TEN

Most members of the group continue to meet during this time.

## SESSION ELEVEN

As the leader enters, he is told by those present that the group continued to meet in his absence. Dr. L. asks if the leader had a good vacation. The leader wonders why Dr. L. asks, wondering too if the idea that the group has met in his absence is regarded by Dr. L. as a fact which should alter the leader's behavior. Dr. L. denies this. Dr. D. then enters. He tells the leader that the group has met in his absence. He then asks the leader if he has had a good vacation. He then quickly warns the leader that he should not be asked why he asks, that he is only trying to be friendly. Dr. L. then tells Dr. D. about his interchange with the leader. Dr. D. laughs extravagantly at the leader's idea.

The group then falls silent. Dr. J. finally observes that the presence of the leader is ruining things. The leader comments that the group's meetings in his absence were designed to ruin his good vacation, but the group, feeling this has failed, also fears that it has backfired.

The group discusses the idea, professing not to understand it. Dr. D. assures the leader that, contrary to what the leader thinks, the previous sessions were excellent.

## SESSION TWELVE

Dr. F. breaks a silence by speaking of how uncomfortable he feels. In turn, everyone draws him out until he is speaking of himself and his background. The leader's impression is that no one is listening very hard, but only enough to be ready to draw him out further once he halts.

Dr. I. eventually remarks that he does not feel what Dr. F. is saying is interesting—or that Dr. F. is really being open. He goes on to say that while he is perhaps jealous of the attention accorded Dr. F., he still doesn't believe Dr. F. is living up to the reputation for openness the others are giving him.

Dr. D. quarrels with this, expressing great interest in what Dr. F. is saying and admiration for him that he says it.

Dr. I. remains unconvinced.

Dr. D. accuses Dr. I. of only being interested in what the leader has to say; he says that Dr. I. was critical of the meetings held without the leader. Dr. D. is quite angry.

An argument ensues between Dr. D. and Dr. I., with most others joining in to help them to “get things out in the open.”

The leader comments, in time, that Dr. I. represents himself

### **SESSION THIRTEEN**

Various people discuss their reluctance to speak—no one feels he has anything worth saying. Everyone reassures the others as to their interest in whatever they might wish to say. Some venture to speak of themselves and are drawn out as was Dr. F., but it is not the same. Eventually some accuse others of being insufficiently open or insufficiently responsive.

### **SESSION FOURTEEN**

Once more people profess the wish to be open but confess their inability. The session proceeds much like the previous one.

The leader comments that no one feels their breasts to have the value of his; when they wish to be open and give, they fear that only shit will emerge. They fear this because they regard everyone else's contributions as so much shit in comparison with what the leader has to offer. But they do not recognize this because they envy the leader and do not wish him to be able to be valuable.

People divide, some taking this as a judgment, others as a description. After some discussion, all agree it is an accurate description. Those who took it as a judgment are reassured that, this being incorrect, the group itself is really valuable, only it's hard to feel that way, as the leader said. Everyone now feels quite hopeful: the group itself

is of great value, the problem was they could not see it.

Thus even in Session Fourteen, the hope reposed in the group as an entity and experience complete and replete survives the actuality of the participants' experience. Only in time do those present allow the leader to have some value, but not until they get over wanting him first to have none and then to have all.

Though obviously a good deal of what transpired was left out of the natural history of this group, even the condensation reveals the two sorts of leadership functions people visualize. Dr. D. exemplifies one: the nominal leader, the other. Dr. D., as was Moses, is an instrumental leader, applying his abilities to help achieve the group's purposes. In this case those purposes were to remain self-sufficiently independent of the nominal leader, and Dr. D. acted consonantly with them. The nominal leader is assigned the function of eucharistically embodying and providing all that the group wants but neither contains nor is contained by. In the present illustration, since the group hoped to contain everything and so to want nothing, no role was to be given the nominal leader. In later sessions when the group tolerated the discovering of its wanting things from the nominal leader, Dr. D. would be replaced as instrumental or Mosaic leader, with that role given to a member of the "group" whom the rest felt best capable of influencing the nominal or eucharistic leader. Dr. D. would be permitted to reassert leadership when self-sufficiency or devaluation of the leader was considered useful once again. (In the session that directly followed Session Twelve, Dr. L. absented himself, therewith standing in the wings as a potential leader for a position even more determined than Dr. D.'s.)

In the final analysis, the belief in groups as an antidote to the envy and helplessness that are aroused when the fantasy that two people are as one and that one—oneself—gives way. The belief also functions as an antidote to the feeling that, although distinct, the other and self are less than fully and mutually reciprocal. The function of a grouping vis-à-vis actual differentiated people is regarded as having an equivalent functional counterpart with respect to "inner people" who behave "within" as also distinct, separate, autonomous, and less than fully and mutually reciprocal to one's desires and who, when such, also arouse envy and helplessness instead of gratitude and satiety.

What happens in groups is the story of the vicissitudes of these twin antidotes when applied to the actuality of the public situation.

## REFERENCES

Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in Groups*. New York Basic Books.

\_\_\_\_ (1962). *Learning from Experience*. New York Basic Books.

\_\_\_\_ (1963). *Elements of Psychoanalysis*. New York Basic Books.

\_\_\_\_ (1965). *Transformations*. New York Basic Books.

\_\_\_\_ (1970). *Attention and Interpretation*. New York Basic Books.

Boris, H. N. (1967). *The (Un)Examined Life*. Plainfield, VT: Goddard College Publications.

\_\_\_\_ (1971). The *Seelsorger* in rural Vermont. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 21 (2): 159-173.

\_\_\_\_ (1976). On hope: its nature and psychotherapy. *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*. 3: 139-150.

\_\_\_\_ (1993). *Passions of the Mind: Unheard Melodies*. New York: New York University Press.

Boris, H. N., Zinberg, N., and Boris, M. (1976). *Teaching Social Change: A Group Approach*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Buxbaum, E. (1945). Transference and group formation in children and adolescents. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*. 2:351-366. New York International Universities Press.

Ezriel, H. (1950). A psychoanalytic approach to group treatment. *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 23:59-74.

Foulkes, S. H., and Anthony, E. J. (1965). *Group Psychotherapy*. New York: Penguin.

Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on sexuality. *Standard Edition* 7:

\_\_\_\_ (1913). Totem and taboo. *Standard Edition* 3:1-162.

\_\_\_\_ (1914). On narcissism: an introduction. *Standard Edition* 14:67-102.

\_\_\_\_ (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *Standard Edition*, 14:237-258.

\_\_\_\_ (1921). Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. *Standard Edition*, 18:67-143.

\_\_\_\_ (1927). The future of an illusion. *Standard Edition* 21:5-56.

\_\_\_\_ (1930). Civilization and its discontents. *Standard Edition* 21:64-145.

\_\_\_\_ (1939). Moses and monotheism. *Standard Edition* 23:7-137.

Glover, E. (1955). *The Technique of Psychoanalysis*. New York: New York University Press.

Klein, M. (1932). *The Psycho-analysis of Children*. London: Hogarth.

[www.freepsychotherapybooks.org](http://www.freepsychotherapybooks.org)



- \_\_\_\_ (1948). *Contributions to Psycho-analysis*. London: Hogarth.
- \_\_\_\_ (1952). *Developments in Psycho-analysis*. Ed. J. Riviere. London: Hogarth.
- \_\_\_\_ (1956). Heimann, P., Money-Kyrle, R., et al. *New Directions in Psychoanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.
- \_\_\_\_ (1957). *Envy and Gratitude*. London: Tavistock.
- \_\_\_\_ (1961). *Narrative of a Child Analysis*. New York: Basic Books.
- \_\_\_\_ (1963). *Our Adult World, and Other Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving Social Conflicts, Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*. Ed. G. Lewin. New York: Harper.
- Redl, F. (1945). The psychology of gang formation and the treatment of juvenile delinquents. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 1:367-378. New York: International Universities Press.
- Scheidlinger, S. (1968). The concept of regression in group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 18:3-20.
- Semrad, E. V., and Day, M. (1966). Book review: group psychotherapy. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14:591-618.
- Slavson, S. R. (1954-1972). A systematic theory of group psychotherapy. A series of 10 papers in the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*. (1954) 4:3-29; (1955) 5:3-30; (1956) 6:3-27; (1959) 9:3-30; (1960) 10:3-21; (1961) 11:3-32; (1962) 12:411-420; (1966) 16:395-404; (1969) 19:3-16; (1972) 22:433-443.
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Wolf, A., and Schwartz, E. A. (1962). *Psycho-analysis in Groups*. New York: Grune & Stratton.
- Yalom, I. D. (1970). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- \_\_\_\_ (1974). Book review: Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, by S. Freud. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 24:67.

## Notes

- 1 We are by no means referring to the entire works of any of these authors, as we are equally failing to mention other writers of value to the field. Yalom's (1970) work provides the interested reader with a far more just compendium of the range of contributors and contributions. See also the survey by Semrad and Day (1966).
- 2 Though we say "fact" here, we mean to regard differences much as we do similarities; differences are as much a function of comparisons as similarities. It is the issue of the selective perception or use of both difference and similarity with which we are engaged here.
- 3 Discussion of the devolution of "inner" and "outer" spaces and boundaries follows.
- 4 For an extended theoretical treatment of hope, see Boris (1976).

