
Deriving a group psychic apparatus and a typology of group mental states from Bion's group dynamics

Med Hafsi*

Nara University, Faculty of Psychology

Abstract

There is abundant psychoanalytically-oriented literature which apply Freud's concepts related to his psychic apparatus theory. For instance, many researchers often describe group phenomena in terms of "conscious", "unconscious", "ego", and "superego". However, with the exception of Rene Kaës's pioneer work, *l'appareil psychic groupal*, there is, to the author's knowledge, no study which has discussed explicitly and systematically the group's psychic apparatus. In the present paper the author has attempted to demonstrate that Wilfred Bion has developed a number of concepts, such as "basic assumption group", "work group", "protomental system", "group mentality", and "group culture", which bear striking resemblance with those used by Freud in his *topographic* and *structural* models. The present study has thus two purposes. The first one is to discuss, from a Bionian vertex, the author's hypothesis that although Bion did not propose any specific theory of the psychic apparatus, his work contains fragments of a theory which includes Freud's two representations or models of the individual psychic apparatus. The second purpose was to propose and discuss a general psychopathology and typology of group's mental state derived by the author from Bion's work on groups.

Key words: Psychic apparatus, basic assumption group, work group, psychopathology

The interest of psychoanalysts in groups goes back to Freud's late works, especially, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). Freud's formulations and hypotheses, developed in these works, had considerable effect on later psychoanalytic theories on group. The early psychoanalytic theories influenced by Freud (e.g., Bion, 1961; Foulkes, 1964; Pichon-Riviere, 1971) conceive groups as a specific psychical entity (Kaes, 1999). Based on Freud's -- and also Lewin's (1948, 1951)-- ideas and suggestions, they argue that this entity is different by from the mere sum of individual processes, but is the result of individual unconscious contributions. The group members contributes, by means of such mental processes, such as identification (Freud, 1921; Ferenczi, 1916) and projective identification (Klein, 1946; Bion, 1967), their unconscious desires, their fears, their dreams, and their respective psychic apparatuses with their contents.

The Psychic Apparatus Model

As shown by the title, the present paper deals with the group's psychic apparatus. The term psychic apparatus is a central concept of Freud's metapsychology. In his *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1938), Freud postulated that mental life is the function of an apparatus which serves the activities of the mind like an instrument constructed of several parts, or 'agencies' having a determined special relation to one another. Each of these agencies fulfills also a particular function (Freud, 1926). However, he clearly emphasized that the idea of psychic apparatus is no more than a fictive construct, or model. Therefore, it is of minor importance to consider the question of what material this psychic apparatus is constructed of.

Freud proposed two complementary topographies of the *psyche*. In the first topography, which is known as the first topography, or the *topographic model*, Freud (1915a) subdivided the psychic apparatus into three psychic areas or layers: the conscious, the pre-conscious, and the unconscious.

The unconscious corresponds to the part of the psychic apparatus that does not ordinarily enter the individual's awareness but may be manifested by slips of the tongue, dreams, and neurotic, psychotic and psychosomatic symptoms. The pre-conscious represents the part that contains thoughts, feelings, and impulses that are not currently part of one's consciousness but that can be readily called into consciousness. The conscious is the opposite of the unconscious. It refers to that part of the mind that comprises all those elements and experiences of which one is aware, can talk, and think about logically. Moreover, Freud conceived of these three layers as separated by a barrier of censorship regulating and controlling the passage of psychic elements from one layer to another, that is from the unconscious and from the pre-conscious to the conscious.

The second topography proposed by Freud (1923) distinguishes three agencies: the Id, Ego, and Superego. This representation of the psychic apparatus is usually referred to as the *structural model*. In this model, the Id represents biological forces in the *psyche*. It is governed by what Freud calls the "pleasure principle", or the notion of hedonism (the seeking of pleasure). Early in the development of his theory Freud saw sexual energy only, or the libido, or the life instinct, as the only source of energy for the Id. Consequently, psychoanalysis was criticized as excessively emphasizing sexuality. This led Freud to propose another instinct, or source of energy, for the Id. So, he introduced "thanatos", or the death instinct. The latter accounts for the instinctual violent urges of humankind and human mind.

According to Freud (1923), the Ego is an agency which mediates between the Id, the Superego, and the external world in order to balance our primitive drives, our moral Ideals and taboos, and the limitations of reality. To successfully mediate between all these parties and fulfill its function of adaptation, the Ego must be able to enforce the postponement of gratification of

the drives and impulses of the Id, until a socially acceptable way to satisfy them is found. This function of the Ego is fulfilled through what Freud calls defense mechanisms.

The Superego is an agency which stands in opposition to the desires of the Id because of their conflicting objectives. For the fulfillment of our biological desires is often socially unacceptable.

The Superego comprises two components: conscience and the Ego-ideal. Conscience involves punishments and warnings. It involves preserving taboos specific to our culture and social environment. Whereas the Ego-ideal is an idealized view of one's self. The Superego is the result of the internalization of the parents and the world view, and norms. If the Ego acts in contradiction with the requirements of the Superego, the person will be invaded by feelings of guilt and/or shame.

The Group Psychic Apparatus

As mentioned above, Freud's works on groups contributed to the understanding of the group as a distinct entity equipped (by its members) with a specific *psyche* and an inherent psychic apparatus. Reading of Freud's (1921) work suggests that this psychic apparatus is the result of the group members bonding by libidinal ties. That is, the group members are libidinally tied to each other and to the leader. These horizontal (member-member) and vertical (member-leader) bonds are the result of the processes of identification and introjection. The group members simultaneously identify with each other in their egos and with the leader; then introject the leader into their individual ego to make of him or her their Ego-ideal. Freud does not state it explicitly, but much of what he has written suggests that it is thus that the group, as a psychic entity with a psychic apparatus, is formed.

A number of analytically-oriented group researchers have adopted Freud hypotheses about the group's psychic apparatus, speaking, for instance of the group Ego, Superego and Id, or, applying the second topic, of the group conscious, unconscious, and preconscious. However, to my knowledge, the author who has clearly addressed the group's psychic apparatus is the French psychoanalyst Rene Kaës (1976), referring to it as "l'appareil psychique groupal" or the group psychic apparatus. He regards the group's psychic apparatus as a structure independent from the group members, that is, a product of the whole group constituted at a trans-individual level. Kaës attributes to this apparatus a function which involves explaining how individual *psyche* get bounded in the group, and shed light on the intersubjective projections and introjections, or unconscious communication within the group.

Wilfred Bion (1961) is one of the earliest thinkers who, stimulated by Freud's hypotheses about the group *psyche*, have developed their own group theories. The hypothesis developed in the present paper is that Bion has used different terms to refer to group entities or phenomena similar to Freud' psychic agencies, namely, conscious, unconscious, Ego, Superego,

and Id. The principal purpose of the present paper is 1) to introduce Bion's basic ideas about group dynamics, reformulating them in terms of a group psychic apparatus as discussed by Freud, and 2) propose a group psychopathology and a general typology of group mental state based on Bion's ideas.

Bion's Group Legacy

Unlike other psychoanalysts, Bion (1961) took an unusual road to rediscover the fundamental principles and tenets of psychoanalysis; he came to psychoanalysis from the group road. For Bion never made a distinction between group *psyche* and individual *psyche*. As discussed elsewhere (Hafsi, 2008a), following Freud (1921) who holds that every psychology is both individual and social, Bion believes that man is basically a gregarious animal, suggesting that no individual, even if living in complete isolation, is free from "the active manifestations of group psychology, even when the conditions to demonstrate this are not present" (Grinberg, et al., 1993; p. 4). For Bion the group is permanently present within the individual, and vice-versa. Psychoanalytical observation of the individual allows us to detect many group phenomena; and the observation of the group and its products (myths for instance) has a lot to teach us about the individual *psyche*. He sees the apparent difference between the group and the individual as an illusion "produced by the fact that the group provides an intelligible field of study for certain aspects of individual psychology..."(p. 134);

Based on the results of his experiment --known as the Northfield experiment-- conducted at the Norfield military psychiatric hospital in the Second World War and his later experience with groups at the Tavistock Clinic, Bion (1961) developed one of the most original group theory which continue to have considerable influence in the field of group and organizational behaviour (De Board, 1978). The following is a brief outline of its basic concepts: Work Group, Specialized Work Group, Basic Assumption Group, Group mentality, and Group culture. .

Work Group: According to Bion (1961), whenever a group is formed and engaged in a given activity, it is characterized by two diametrically opposed and simultaneous mental activities, he called *work group* (WG) and *basic assumption group* (baG), with the term *group* referring "only to the mental activity of a particular kind, not to the people indulged in it" (p. 144).

The WG is a mental state which depicts a group whose members consciously and unconsciously cooperate in order to carry out their basic task. That is, when operating under the influence of this mental state, the group is task-centered, uses scientific methods, is conscious of the passage of time, able to learn from experience and concerned about change, improvement and development; in a few words, the group is in touch with reality.

This work activity, or mentality is diametrically opposed with the unconscious mental activity, the baG, with which it always coexists and interacts. According to Bion (1961),

depending on the group's mental state, the "WG activity is obstructed, diverted, and on occasion assisted, by" (p. 146) the baG. When it is the baG that is dominant, the group will share a given unconscious assumption, and behaves "as if" this assumption reflects reality, distorting thus the later and favouring phantasy. It is to this shared assumption that Bion refers when using the term "basic assumption group". He believed that the basic assumption could colour, influence, and suffuse any rational activity the group would attempt to perform, and adumbrated three different basic assumptions, namely the basic assumption of dependency (baD), the basic assumption of fight/flight (baF), and the basic assumption of pairing (baP).

Briefly described, the baD is characterized by a collective assumption or phantasy that the group has met in order to depend mentally and physically on a leader who is expected to be omniscient, and able to unconditionally help the group whatever the problem confronted with is.

When the group is under the influence of baF, its members behave as if they have met to fight or flee from an enemy (leader, scapegoat, therapist, out-group, etc.). The group activity and psychic energy is therefore wasted in toward dealing with the latter.

Finally, in the case of baP, the group is characterized by a mental state of patience and expectancy; the group unconsciously behaves as if it is expecting the birth of something, "a messianic something" (a plan, an idea, etc.) which will save the group members from their feelings of mutual hatred, self-destructiveness and despair (see, Hafsi, 2004, for a detailed description of the baG). Discussing these groups in details goes far beyond the scope of the present paper; the reader should refer to Bion's (1961), and, among others, the author's (e.g., Hafsi, 2000; 2002) works for a detailed description of these groups.

Specialized Work Group: It is noteworthy that these two group mental activities (WG and WG) are not independent. The WG activity coexists always with only one baG (Bion, 1961) with which it can have three different types of relationships (Hafsi, 2003 and 2004): *integrative relationship*, *obstructive relationship*, and *rigid relationship*.

In favorable conditions, it is the *integrative relationship* that prevails. This kind of relationship involves another entity Bion (1961) called the "specialized work group"(SWG). Like the WG of which it constitutes a part, SWG refers both to a function and its bearer, namely a person, or a subgroup within the group (Hafsi, 2003; 2004). There are as much SWG as baG, each SWG being specialized in a specific baG. Bion writes that "these groups are budded off by the main group of which they form a part, for the specific purpose of neutralizing" (pp. 157-158) the baG. In other words, their function consists in neutralizing and containing the baG in a way that it is neither completely inhibited nor strong enough to overwhelm, or obstruct the WG activity of the whole group. This containment function involves translating action into baG mentality or spirit. This corresponds to the opposite of the WG function which consists essentially in translating ideas, thoughts and feelings into action. To put it differently, in an integrative relationship, the SWG filters the baG, keeping only its feelings and thoughts, and other mental

aspects which will be made available to the WG. According to Bion, "it must be regarded as a failure in the specialized work group if dependent or fight-flight group activity either ceases to manifest within the specialized groups or else grows to overwhelming strength"(p. 157). Hence, this type of relationship is characterized by the whole group flexibility and tolerance towards the baG. The other kind of relationship between the WG and baG will be discussed later. Let us thus first briefly introduce two other of Bion's concepts, namely, *group mentality* and *group culture*.

Group Mentality and Group Culture: Bion (1961) holds that in a group situation, what the individual contributes to the group reflects not only his or her own personality, or valency (Hafsi, 2008) but also the group's opinion or feeling as a whole. Moreover, individual contributions can be sorted into two kinds. One kind of contributions the individual "is prepared to make as coming unmistakably from himself, but there are others which he would wish to make anonymously" (Bion,1961; p. 50). The latter contributions are those he or she does not wish to be identified with by the rest of the group, for they are perceived as unwanted and / or unacceptable parts of the self (desires, impulses, etc.). This anonymous contribution is made possible by the group, by providing its members with the necessary means, Bion referred to as "group mentality", and defined as

"the pool to which the anonymous contribution are made, and through which the impulses and desires implicit in these contributions are gratified. Any contribution to this group must enlist the support of, or be in conformity with, the other anonymous contributions to the group...I should expect that the group mentality as I have postulated it, would be opposed to the avowed aims of the individual members of the group . (p. 50).

Put differently, Bion (1961) regards group mentality as an "unanimous expression of the will of the group...to which individuals contribute anonymously" (p. 59), and which prevents the latter from pursuing their personal aims. However, he did not discuss how this group mentality is formed. Therefore I (Hafsi, 2007) have tried to shed light on its formation process, arguing that group mentality is the result of the group members bidding by means of *valency** and their resort to mutual projective identification.

Bion (1961) contributed another important concept, namely *group culture*. Due to the fact that group mentality prevents the group member from behaving in variance with the group's unanimous will, and pursuing his or her aims and realizing his or her desires, this will lead to a conflict between the two. This conflict is, according to Bion countered by the creation of a *group culture*. In Bion's terms, group culture is a function of the conflict between the individual's

* Bion (1961) defines *valency* as " a capacity for instantaneous involuntary combination of one individual with another for sharing and acting on a basic assumption" (p. 153) group.

interests and group mentality. It is the result of a compromise whose purpose is gratifying both sides in a non conflictual manner, and saving thereby the whole group from disintegration.

A Bionian Group Psychic Apparatus

Bion did not treat or discuss directly the psychic apparatus problem. Like most of Melanie Klein's followers and most of analysts belonging to the school of object relations theory in general, he continued using Freud's concepts of Ego, Superego and Id when referring to individual *psyche*. However, regarding the group, Bion (1961), unlike other analysts, did not confine himself to a mere application of the psychic apparatus to the group. He believed that the "term psycho-analysis should continue to be applied...to the fundamental principles of psycho-analysis" (p. 190), and new terms should be created to refer to and account for group phenomena.

As mentioned above, the author postulates that Bion attempted to put into practice what he recommended. He proposed a series of terms (work group, specialized work group, basic assumption group, group mentality, group culture, and protomental system, etc...) in order to account for the group *psyche*, especially the group psychic apparatus.

A meticulous reading of Bion's "Experiences in groups" has led the author to discover, disguised in new concepts, the old freudian concept of *psychic apparatus* and its two forms, namely the first topography, and second topography.

As shown in Figure 1, there is a striking resemblance between Freud's concepts and those proposed by Bion. Although he did not state it clearly, like Freud, Bion (1961) seems to apprehend also the group *psyche* in terms of three different and inter-related levels: WG, baG, and *protomental system*.

Freud's Terminology	Bion's Terminology
Conscious: The part of the mind comprising all those elements of the self, and experiences which one is aware of, can talk, and think about logically.	Work Group: is a mental state characterizing a group which is task-centered, uses scientific methods, is conscious of the passage of time, able to learn from experience, values time and development; in a few words, is in touch with reality.
Preconscious: The part that contains thoughts, feelings, and impulses that are not currently part of one's consciousness but that can be readily called into consciousness.	Basic Assumption Group: Mental activities and powerful and seemingly chaotic emotional drives which spring from basic assumptions commonly held by the group and which is recognizable to both the therapist and the group.
Unconscious: Corresponds to the part of the psychic apparatus that does not ordinarily enter the individual's awareness	Protomental System: Corresponds to layer where physical and psychological or mental are undifferentiated. It is a matrix formed by the inoperative baGs, and from which the emotions proper to the baGs flow to pervade the mental life of the group. This matrix is beyond the group consciousness.

Figure 1. A conceptual comparison between Freud's topographic model and Bion's concepts

As shown by Bion's definition, the concept of work group (WG) refers to the conscious mental activity of the group. This conscious activity involves being aware of and taking into account the reality. WG includes reality-based rules, methods, plans, and various other elements of which the group is aware, can talk about and communicate to others. In this sense, we can postulate that Bion's WG concept is the equivalent of Freud's conscious.

The baG group is often referred to as an unconscious mental activity, diametrically opposite to WG. However, as revealed by a close reading of Bion's "experiences in groups"(1961), the three baGs (dependency, fight/flight, and pairing) can be divided into two components: 1) the manifest psychological phenomena with their behavioral and verbal expressions, and 2) their protomental representatives which are confined into the *protomental system** (another of Bion's concepts) as undifferentiated (neither physical nor psychical) entities. The former component which corresponds to the baG is not completely unconscious. In the beginning the group is not aware of the baG; however, according to the author's experience, proper interpretations by the therapist will soon help the group become conscious of it, stirring also at the same time the group's resistance. The short time it takes to the group to be conscious of the baG suggests that the latter is not an unconscious but a pre-conscious psychological phenomenon. Thus defined, the baG may be regarded therefore as the group equivalent of the Freud's pre-conscious. As shown in Figure 1, the equivalent of the unconscious in Bion's terminology would be the protomental representatives of the baGs. According to Bion (1961), each basic assumption group has its protomental representative. He speaks therefore of protomental baD (pmD), protomental baF (pmF), and protomental baP (pmP). These protomental representative confined to the protomental system are beyond the group's consciousness; with the protomental system that contain them, they constitute the "group matrix". Precisely speaking, it is this matrix that corresponds to the Freudian unconscious. Like for the unconscious, it is therefore from this matrix that spring group distress, dis-eases (and diseases) and any pathological group phenomenon (Bion, 1961).

Freud's Concepts	Bion's Concepts
Ego	WG
Id	bAG + pmbaG (group matrix)
Superego • Conscience • Ego ideal	Group mentality + Group culture • Group mentality • Group culture

Figure 2. A conceptual comparison between Freud's structural model and Bion's concepts.

* This hypothetical concept which "transcends experience" (p. 101), was proposed by Bion(1961)to explain the whereabouts of the two suppressed and non-operative basic assumption groups.

Like Freud, Bion also postulates the existence of censorship between the conscious and unconscious. He (1962, 1963) attributed this function to an entity or a hypothetical membran he named the "*contact-barrier*", borrowing this term from Freud. This contact-barrier, which is the result of coheration and proliferation of *alpha-elements*, separates conscious from unconscious elements and allows the ego to distinguish between them. Besides the separating function the contact barrier fulfils also another one, a repressive function. According to Bion, alpha-elements are the results of the transformation of sensory and bodily impressions deprived of meaning into meaningful experiences. This transformation process is carried out by the subject's own or the object's (mother, therapist, etc.) *alpha function*. For further details about this function, refer to Bion's own works (e.g., Bion,1962; 1963).

Concerning the relationship between Freud's second topography and Bion's group concepts, the author believes that, as represented in Figure 2, there is also a striking resemblance between Freud's structural model and Bion's group concepts. This belief was first triggered by the following statement by Bion (1961) himself:

"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...to the Ego. This facet of mental activity in a group I have called the Work Group" (pp. 143-44).

As suggested by this statement, Bion's WG seems to be the equivalent of the Ego as conceptualized by Freud (1911). WG fulfils a function similar to those characterizing the Ego. Like the Ego, WG with its component the SWG, fulfils two principal functions: one defensive and the other adaptive. Owing to these functions, the WG also helps, like in the case of individual Ego, the group to get in touch with reality, adapt to its requirements, and therefore develop. Of course, these functions and their results characterize, as discussed further, only what may be called a "normal" group, not all groups.

Bion did not develop further this comparison of his concepts with Freud's ones. He confined himself to referring to the Ego, mentioning none of the other two agencies, namely, Superego and Id. However, although he did not attempt any comparison between his own concepts and those Freudian ones, a close review of the former's concepts suggests a striking similarity between the two.

Based on Bion's (1961) definition of baG with its prototype confined to the protomental system

(protomental basic assumption group, or pmbaG), the author postulates that, as shown in Figure 2, this concept constitutes in the case of the group the equivalent of Freud's Id. Like the Id, baG, especially pmbaG, is unconscious and constitutes the instinctual side of the *psyche*; its manifest contents are psychic expressions of instincts or drives (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973). According to Freud (1915b), a drive "appears...as a concept on the frontier between the *mental* and the *somatic*, as the psychological representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body" (pp. 121-122). Similarly, in Bion's terminology, drive corresponds also, in the case of the group, to a protomental entity, that is, an undifferentiated (neither somatic, nor psychic) phenomenon springing from the protomental system.

As previously mentioned, the Freudian Superego is conceived of as comprising two components: conscience and the Ego-ideal. The former is experienced by the person as punishments and warnings issued by an internal entity upon the self. This component involves maintaining norms and taboos specific to our culture and society. Whereas the latter (Ego-ideal), which is the result of narcissism (idealization of the Ego) and identification to the parents and collective ideals, constitutes an internal model the person seeks consciously and/or unconsciously to comply with (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973).

As indicated in Figure 2, Bion's concepts of *group mentality* and *group culture*, as an indifferenced whole, appears to fulfill, in the group *psyche*, functions similar to those attributed to the Superego. Like conscience, group mentality is fundamentally characterized by anti-diversity and pro-conformity. It is opposed to any individual aim, desire and action which are not in concordance with and do not reflect the whole group's unconscious will and wish.

On the other hand, group culture is, as discussed above, a set of rules and norms the group develops. It seems to fulfill a function which aims at helping the group resolve the conflict resulting from the opposition between group mentality and individual members. It reflects the group's narcissistic desire to protect the group from disintegration, and aims at complying with the collective ideal of a group free from aggression, conflict, and a group characterized by cooperation. Thus defined, group culture can be interpreted as being the counterpart of the Ego-ideal in Freud's structural model.

To summarize, Bion developed a theory of the group *psyche* and dynamics which apparently is completely different from what Freud has taught us about the human *psyche*. However, a close examination of Bion's theoretical contribution, led the author to discover Freud's both models of the *psyche* (typographical and structural models) hidden within the former's principal concepts, namely the baG, WG, SWG, and other related concepts. The result of this discovery has been discussed in the first part of the present article. Furthermore, this close reading of Bion's work has also led the author to develop a group psychopathology, and a general typology

of group mental states based on Bion's concepts. This is discussed here below.

A Bionian typology of Group Mental State

Litterature on group psychology is abundant with references to, suggestions, and speculations concerning the (small and large) group's mental state (e.g. Trotter, 1916; Lebon, 1920; McDougall, 1920; Freud, 1921; Jaques, 1955; Bion, 1961). However, to the author knowledge, there is no psychoanalytical theory describing in details the causes and the different categories of group psychopathology. Relatively speaking, Bion has probably contributed the most suggestive work on group, although he confined himself to merely spreading conceptual seeds. In the present work the author has attempted to gather these seeds into a comprehensible theory concerning the classification or typology of group mental states.

According to Bion (1961), the so-called "group diseases" (including physical diseases, such as tuberculosis, venereal diseases, diabetes, and others so-called psychosomatic diseases) are fundamentally collective diseases which "manifest themselves in the individual" (p. 102). A close investigation of these diseases reveals that although they are individually expressed, they present characteristics demonstrating that their roots are found in the group protomental system, or, specifically speaking, in the matrix rather than in the individual. However, Bion makes it clear that the group matrix and its content does not constitute the cause of these diseases. He suggested that the cause may lie in the dominant baG and the nature of its relationship with the WG. Besides *cause* and *matrix*, a disease is also characterized by an *affiliation* with a specific baG. Hence, he argued "that for the sake of completeness a disease should be" (p. 106) apprehended and categorized based on these three variables.

As mentioned previously, Bion (1961) argued that the content of the group matrix is the result of the relationship between WG and the baG coexisting with it. Developing further Bion's idea concerning the relationship, the author (Hafsi, 2002; 2003; 2004,) suggested three kinds of relationships: 1) integrative relationship, 2)"conspiracy" relationship(Bion dealt only with this one), and 3) impeding relationship. Each of these relationships is associated with a specific group mental state. He classified group mental states into three general categories: group normal state, neurotic state, and psychotic state.

Normal State: Bion (1961) did not provide us with a definition of what constitutes a normal group, or a normal mental state of a group. However, his definition of WG mentioned above suggests that a normal state would correspond to a group climate characterized by a predominance of WG activity. Moreover, since WG is always supposed to coexist with one baG, we can assume that for Bion, a normal state constitutes a mental state where the WG has an *integrative relationship* with the baG with which it coexists. This kind of relationship involves 1) neutralizing the two other inoperative baGs to prevent them from obstructing the WG

function, and 2) containing the baG existing (operating) with the WG. Containing involves first being receptive to and tolerant of both the inoperative and the operative baG, and then being able to transform the latter's behaviour (action) into baG mentality for the benefit of WG activity.

This neutralization of the inoperative and containment of the operative baG is, as previously mentioned, fulfilled by the SWG. Hence, the baG operating with the WG is expressed only in form of mentality which serves to sustain and energize the WG activity.

As discussed above, when characterized by this normal mental state, the group is conscious of reality; the reality to conduct the task for which it was formed, by acquiring the necessary skills, cooperating and using sophisticated means. Members are also able to tolerate the frustration inherent in WG activity, are conscious of time and the meaning it has for the task, and for the whole group process. The group is also characterized by a capacity to think and learn from its successful as well as failure experiences. Consequently, the group is able to achieve its aim and develop.

Neurotic State: This mental state is associated with a *conspiracy relationship* (Bion, 1961) between WG and the baG operating with it. This kind of relationship is characterized by a failure of the SWG to fulfill properly both its containing and neutralizing functions. The SWG has failed to contain and then transform the operative baG action into baG mentality (spirit) in order to use it for the service of WG. Consequently, it fulfills a diametrically opposed function, namely it transforms baG mentality into baG action.

The inoperative two baGs are also dealt with in a different fashion. Since it is unable of neutralizing the baG of its speciality, the SWG resorts to its suppression and confinement into the protomental system. As a result, regardless of the nature of the task, only expressions of the operative baG are, even if inappropriate, allowed and promoted. The group displaying neurotic state, or neurotic group, is therefore characterized by lack of flexibility in its contact with reality, and by overactivity, and insufficient frustration toleration. Bion (1967) distinguishes two kind of reaction to frustration: *evasion* and *modification*. Unlike the normal group, which is more tolerant towards frustration and is ready to modify (modification) it whenever possible, the neurotic group has a lower frustration toleration and tend therefore to evade (evasion) it resorting to action. Most of the group energy is therefore used for suppression of the inoperative baGs and overactivity. Only a relatively low amount of energy is left for the task, adaptation, and development. The neurotic group's tragedy is that it is conscious of the pathological nature of its behavior, but feels helpless regarding the way to remedy it.

Psychotic State: The third kind of relationship between WG and baG (impeding relationship) is such that the former is almost completely overwhelmed by the latter. This relationship is also characterized by a complete failure of the SWG in its neutralization and containment function. That is, SWG is unable to cope efficiently with both the operative and the inoperative baGs. Consequently, the baG activity reigns, inhibiting thus the WG one. The group

is consequently neither able to repress nor to tolerate the baGs because it is deprived of what Bion (1962) calls *alpha function*; a mental entity which allows the subject (person, group, etc.) to make sense of sensory, physical and mental experience. Due to the lack of alpha function and its correlate, a *contact barriere*, the group is unable think, and consequently can not distinguish between conscious and unconscious, and between reality and phantasy. Alpha function provides the group with *alpha-elements*, or digested mental elements (thoughts, visual, auditory, alfactory, and tactile images); its lack leaves the group with meaningless sensory impressions, or *beta-elements* and *beta-screen*, as Bion (1962) calls them. Those beta-elements are not suited for thinking; they are intolerable and good only for evacuation by means of projective identification.

The resulting mental state is such that the (psychotic) group is satisfied neither by the WG nor the baG. Unlike in the normal state, the group oscillates alternatively from WG to a given baG, and from a baG to another. Bion (1961) writes that "though the work group function (WG) 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..." (p.154). For both WG and baG are experienced as source of "nameless dread" (Bion, 1962) and anxiety. That is why the group will try to alternate from one baG to another to avoid them, however this attempt ends in failure. For all what the group can avoid partially is WG only.

This mental state, which the author calls psychotic state, corresponds to the mental state Bion (1961) described under the term of baG activity. Therefore, when trapped in this pathological mental state, the group is linked not by cooperation but with "valency" (see Hafsi, 2006a; 2008b), that is, an "instantaneous involuntary combination of one individual with another for sharing and acting on basic assumption" (Bion,1961; p. 153). Cooperation which is voluntary and conscious requires awareness of and sufficient contact with reality, two variables lacking under this mental state. Moreover, owing to this psychotic state, the (psychotic) group is unable to think, and learn from experience. It also has no sense of time, and worrying about development and change is the least of its preoccupations. As a result, the psychotic group is locked in a state of stagnation, and is as such predestinated to failure, desintegration, and/or self-annihilation.

Conclusions

The present article had two purposes. The first one was to discuss, from a Bionian *vertex* (Bion, 1970), the present author's hypothesis that although Bion did not propose any specific theory of the psychic apparatus, his work includes fragments of a theory which includes Freud's two representations or models of the psychic apparatus. The second purpose was to discuss a general psychopathology and typology of group's mental state inferred by the author from Bion's group theory.

In his pioneer work, *Experiences in Groups*, Bion (1961) defined his famous concepts of "work group" (WG) and "basic assumption group" (baG) as, respectively conscious and unconscious mental activities. Which suggests somehow a conceptual correlation between Bion's concepts and Freud's three mental layers-- Conscious, Preconscious, and Unconscious-- forming his *topographic model*. Moreover, Bion also equated WG with the Freudian Ego, but did not go beyond this. Consequently, the author believes that if there is an entity equivalent to the Ego, there must exist also entities equivalent to the two other agencies described by Freud as a part of his *structural model* of the implicit psychic apparatus.

Based on Bion's few implicit references to the two models of psychic apparatus, the author argued that, seen from the topographic model, WG corresponds to the conscious (Cs). Like the Cs, WG includes principally conscious elements, such as task-related aspects (for instance, task content, methods, time and place), and is centred on and related to reality and its requirements.

The Bionian counterpart of the Freudian pre-conscious (Ucs) is the baG. Like the Pcs, baG is preconscious to the group, but the latter can easily become aware of it following interventions from within (from a member, for instance) or without the group (e.g., from the therapist).

The Bionian concept that correspond to Freud's unconscious Ucs is the one of *protomental system* and its content (inoperative pmbaGs and the group *matrix* they constitute). For the group to become conscious of the group matrix and its contents (pmbaGs), these must be differentiated and expressed psychologically and/or behaviorally. Only after they are thus expressed, these pmbaGs became baGs and therefore objects of interpretation and awareness for the whole group, including the therapist.

Concerning the second model of the psychic apparatus, the *structural model*, Bion (1961) himself recognized that WG fulfils functions similar to those attributed by Freud to the Ego. This statement suggests a given resemblance between WG and Ego. Therefore, developing further Bion's idea, the author argued that there is a striking resemblance between, on one hand the Id and the baG(s) with its (their) prototype(s) confined to the protomental system (pmbaG), and, on the other hand, between the Superego and the *group mentality* and the *group culture* understood as a whole mental entity.

Finally, based on Bion(1961)'s discussion concerning the relationship between WG (including SWG) and the baG operating with it, the author proposed a typology of the group's mental state including three different states: normal, neurotic, and psychotic states. He attributed the normal state to an *integrative relationship* between the WG and SWG, a relationship characterized by a SWG capable of containing the operative baG and neutralizing the two others (pmbaGs), preventing them from hindering the WG function of the group-as-a-whole. Whereas the neurotic state is understood as resulting from what Bion called a "*conspiracy relationship*". In this relationship, SWG is not only unable to properly contain and, consequently, transform the operative baG, but it also lacks flexibility. That is, the only defensive means used by the SWG

against the inoperative baGs is their repression and confinement into the protomental system, promoting, regardless of the nature of the task, free expression of only the operative baG. Concerning the psychotic state, the author argued that it is the result of an "impeding relationship" between the two groups (WG and baG). The principal features of this type of relationship are lack of an effective SWG and its consequences: a hypotrophied WG, uncontained operative baG, and unneutralized pmbaGs. Under the influence of this mental state, which Bion (1961) described under the generic term of baG, WG is permanently pervaded and dominated alternatively by the baGs, affecting negatively thus the group's contact with reality.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the main motive of the present article is not merely to reveal the Bionian (embryonic) theory about the group's mental apparatus, and propose a typology of the group mental state based on Bion's ideas, but to pave the way for further and deeper examination and completion of Bion's theoretical contribution. Bion has contributed a number of uncomplete and unsaturated concepts and ideas about the group. The author hopes, therefore, that the conclusions drawn here will motivate Bion's reader to try to reapprehend these ideas from different vertices, completing them, and contributing thereby to deepen our understanding of the primary process characterizing the human group.

References

- Bion, W. (1961). *Experiences in groups and other papers*. London: Karnac Books.
- Bion, W. (1962). *Learning from experience*. London: Basic Books.
- Bion, W. (1963). *Elements of psycho-analysis*. London: Heinemann.
- Bion, W. (1967). *Second Thoughts*. London: Karnac Books.
- Bion, W. (1970). *Attention and interpretation*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- De Board, R. (1978). *The psychoanalysis of organizations: A psychoanalytic approach to behaviour in groups and organizations*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Ferenczi, S. (1916). *Contributions to psychoanalysis*. Boston: Richard Badger.
- Foulkes, S. H. (1964). *Therapeutic group analysis*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Freud, S. (1911). Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning. *SE*, 12. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1913). Totem and taboo. *SE*, 13. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1915a). The unconscious. *SE*. 14. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1915b) Instincts and their vicissitudes. *SE*, 14. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1921). Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. *SE*. 18. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1923). The Ego and the Id. *SE*. 19. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1926). The question of lay analysis. *SE*. 20. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1930). Civilization and its discontents. *SE*. 21. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1938). An outline of psychoanalysis. *SE*. 23. London: Hogarth Press.

- Grinberg, L., Sor, D., & de Bianchedi, E.T. (1993). *New introduction to the work of Bion*. New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Hafsi, M. (2000). The basic assumption group reconsidered: A shift from regression to thinking (In Japanese with English abstract). *Journal of The Japanese Association of Group Psychotherapy*, 16, 75-82.
- Hafsi, M. (2002). Specialized work group as a catalyst: Dealing with it in D-groups [In Japanese with English abstract]. *Journal of The Japanese Association of Group Psychotherapy*, 18 (1), 75-82.
- Hafsi, M. (2003). Lamentation from the protomental system: Fainting as a result of the failure to contain the group's latent dependency [in Japanese with English abstract]. *Journal of The Japanese Association of Group Psychotherapy*, 19 (1), 38-46.
- Hafsi, M. (2004). *Orokasa no seishinbunseki* (in Japanese) [The psychoanalysis of stupidity]. Kyoto: Nakanishiya Publishing Co.
- Hafsi, M. (2006a). The chemistry of interpersonal attraction: Developing further Bion's concept of "valency". *Memoirs of Nara University*, 34, 87-112.
- Hafsi, M. (2006b). Caught in the trap of projective identification. Enacting the group's basic assumption of dependency. *Annual Reports of the Graduate School of Nara University*, 11, 1-18.
- Hafsi, M. (2008a). The myth of Oedipus from another psychoanalytic vertex: The "invisible large group" and its psychodynamics. *Annual Reports of the Graduate School of Nara University*, 13, 23-41.
- Hafsi, M. (2008b). The valency theory: The human bond from a new psychoanalytic perspective. *Memoirs of Nara University*, 36, 105-130.
- Jaques, E. (1955). Social Systems as a Defence against Persecutory and Depressive Anxiety. In M. Klein, et al. (Eds). *New Directions in Psycho-Analysis*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Kaës, R. (1976). *L'appareil psychique groupal: Constructions du group*. Paris: Dunod.
- Kaës, R. (1999). *Les théories psychanalytiques du group*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Klein, M. (1946). Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms. In *Envy and Gratitude, and Other Works: 1946-1963*. New York: Dell, 1977.
- Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J.B. (1973). *The language of psycho-analysis*. London: W.W. Norton & Company, Ltd.
- Lebon, G. (1920). *The crowd: A study of the popular mind*. London: Fisher Unwin.
- Lewin, K. (1948). Experiments in social space. In G.W. Lewin (ed.), *Resolving social conflicts*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lewin, K. (1951). Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers. D. Cartwright (ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- McDougall, W. (1920). *The group mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pichon-Rivière, E. (1971). *El proceso grupal*. *Del psicoanálisis a la psicología social* (1). Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.
- Trotter, W. (1916). *Instincts of the herd in peace and war*. London: Oxford University.