Group Mentality and the Ways of Counteracting Individual Deviance from the Dominant Basic Assumption in D-groups *

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper, the author discusses Bion's concept of *group mentality*, and the methods used by the group to express it in order to counteract individual deviance from the dominant basic assumption as discussed by Bion. Group mentality is defined here as *"the unanimous expression of the will of the group, contributed to by the individual in ways of which he is unaware, influencing him disagreeably whenever he thinks or behaves in a manner at variance with the basic assumptions."*. After introducing some basic Bionian concepts, the author describes some of the most frequently observed expressions of group mentality. That is, he adumbrated six expressions, namely, rejection by prohibition, the "pliers" method, ignorance, negative echoeing, myth creation, and silence. These forms of group mentality expressions are described and illustrated by means of clinical vignettes extracted from D-groups (diagnostic groups) lead by the author. In his famous *Experiences in Groups*, Bion has attracted our attention to the existence of group mentality, without providing us with information about its forms of expression. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to shed more light on this concept, and its relationship with other Bionian concepts, namely *group culture* and *basic assumption group*.

The title of the present study comprises two main concepts that have not, relatively been discussed at length, namely, *group mentality* and *D-group*. Therefore, I will attempt to provide the reader with a brief introduction to these concepts, beginning with the latter.

The concept of D-group, is an abbreviation (Hafsi, 1999b) of the French word of *group de diagnostic* widely used by the research team of the CEFFRAP (Centre d'Etudes Françaises pour la Formation et la Recherche Active en Psychologie) in France. Among the most representative members of the CEFFRAP are Anzieu (1984), Kaës (1976), Béjarano (1976), Pontalis (1963), and Missenard (1971). As discussed by Anzieu, D-group corresponds to a psychoanalytically oriented T-group. It is usually constituted of 7 to 15 members, one monitor or trainer, and, eventually, a co-trainer

and two observers. The purpose of a D-group is to provide the participants with a training opportunity by not only learning about, but also experiencing the group, as an object, and the resulting object relations. This kind of group experience involves, for instance, regression to those infantile psychotic positions Melanie Klein called paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, and to what Bion (1962) named basic assumptions. In this sense, D-group should be distinguished from the Lewian approach or T-group. For, unlike in the latter, in the former not only secondary process but primary process is also dealt with in the group by the trainer (Anzieu, 1975).

As discussed by Anzieu (1975), D-group is usually conducted following five main rules that correspond to those of psychoanalysis. The first rule, or the *rule of verbalization*, consists mainly in using language ("what we do is to speak") as a means of intragroup communication. The participants are invited to speak their mind freely — this *rule of free speech* is a complementary one. The second rule, or *rule of here-and-now* stresses the importance of concentrating on the group mental activity and what the group is experiencing now during the session and in the group meeting room. The third rule is that of *abstinence* from socializing with the participants, or taking part in any of their activities outside the sessions. This rule applies to the trainer as well as to the co-trainer and the observers. The *rule of substitution* constitutes another important rule. It invites the participants to restitute, or to report to the group what has taken place, or said by the participants about the group outside the sessions. The last rule corresponds to the *rule of discretion* (all what is said in the session should not be leaked to the outside). As a complementary rule, the *rule of anonymity* assures the participants that their names will not be divulgated by the staff, however, they can reveal their names to each other if they want, to facilitate contact.

The role of the trainer and observers are defined by the former in the beginning of the first session. The trainer's role consists in experiencing the group, understanding what is taking place in the here-and-now, and transmitting what he/she understood about the group process and dynamics to the group as a whole. He/she is not supposed to propose thema for discussion or organize the discussion. The trainer introduces also the observers and defines their role which consists in taking notes during the sessions, helping the monitor to understand the group and examine his/her countertransference after each session.

BION'S CONTRIBUTION

As mentioned above, the second concept to be defined is the concept of *group mentality* which constitutes an essential part of Wilfred Bion's clinical and theoretical

work on groups. Therefore, it is indispensable to give a schematic introduction to this work for a better understanding of what he meant by *group mentality.*

Discussing the individual-group relationship, Bion (1961) shows his approval of the Freudian belief that any psychology is in the last analysis a social psychology. Moreover, like Freud, Bion rejects also the idea of the existence of a *herd instinct.* For him, the human being is a gregarious animal by nature; he/she cannot avoid belonging to a group, and free him/herself from the dilemma of being *"at war with the group and with those forces in him that determine his groupishness"* (Sutherland, 1985; p. 67); this groupishness is in no way the product of the group, but to be discerned, activated and became thus an object of observation, the group situation is indispensable.

In his *Group Dynamics,* Bion (1961) has always tried, whenever possible, to complete Freud's views on group. According to Freud (1921), the relationships present in the group have for prototype the relationships characterizing the developmental stage of the Oedipus Complex. That is, emotional features found in the group are neurotic in character, and the anxiety experienced within the group is thus that of the fear of castration and loss of love. Whereas Bion saw these emotions as deriving from much earlier phases of the infant's development (paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions), and their inherent anxieties, fears, and the characteristic defense mechanisms (splitting, projective identification, denial, idealization, etc.,.)described by Melanie Klein (1955).

Moreover, Bion argued that, unlike what Freud thought, group members are not always bound to each other and to the leader through libidinal ties. The latter kind of ties characterizes solely the group operating under what Bion called the *basic assumption of pairing* discussed below. Depending on whether it is the *work group* or the basic assumption group that is dominant, the members can be bound through *cooperation or valency.* When the group is functioning under the influence of a given basic assumption, to be bound to each other and to the whole group, the members should have the valency that corresponds to the dominant basic assumption. On the other hand, when the work group prevails, group members are linked by cooperation.

THE WORK GROUP AND BASIC ASSUMPTION GROUP

Any group, whatever its nature (large or small), constitution, structure and aim, has a basic task that members are expected to perform when they get together. For the task to be performed, each individual is expected, depending on his/her capacity and skill, to cooperate. *Cooperation* is thus a prerequisite for the group activity. On the other hand, participation in the group activity requires a given period of time of

"training and a capacity for experience" (Bion, 1961; p. 143). Another indispensable characteristic of a group engaged in its task is the fact of being in touch with reality by using rational and, however rudimentary, scientific methods.   Therefore, time and development, as elements of the task reality,   play also a considerable role in the group activity. It is this way of functioning that Bion calls the *work group*, emphasizing that the term *group embraces only mental activity of a particular kind, not the people who indulge in it"* (p. 144).   To summary, a group is described as functioning as a work group if it is characterized by a mental activity which involves 1) focusing on the group's basic task, 2) utilization of scientific and reality-based methods to perform the task, 3) evaluation of time and development, and, as a matter of fact, *cooperation* as a tie bounding the group members.

In order to provide the reader with further details about what he meant by *work group*, Bion (1961) contrasts it with what he called the *basic assumption group*. According to Bion, although the *work-group* activity is indispensable for the group development, it is often *"obstructed, diverted, and on occasion assisted, by certain other ·mental activities that have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drives. These activities, at first sight chaotic, are given a certain cohesion if it is assumed that they spring from basic assumptions common to all the group."* (p. 146).   These basic assumptions color all the group's activity, and are therefore reflected in the group's (or only in some members') beliefs about most of the group's aspects (leadership, organization, planning, etc.).

The mental activity characterized by a basic assumption is called *basic assumption group*.   Based on his work with groups, Bion adumbrated three types of basic assumptions which he named respectively *basic assumption of dependence*, *basic assumption of fight / flight*, and *basic assumption of pairing*.

Basic Assumption of Dependence (baD): The basic assumption shared by the whole group here is the belief and impression that 1) the outside world is unfriendly, and cold, and that 2) the group *"is met in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment, material and spiritual, and protection."* (Bion, 1961; p.147). Therefore, the group behaves "as if" the leader is omnipotent and omniscient, and themselves immature, needful, helpless, and unable to do anything by themselves.   The group's idealization of the leader (therapist or another group member) results in desperate attempts to get knowledge, help and solutions for their problems in a greedy and never-satisfied way.   When the leader fails to meet their needs and expectancy, the group reacts with denial and devaluation of the latter, and search for a new leader who will take the group in charge.   This "simple" form of baD has also a reverse form wherein it is the leader who is taken in charge and sustained by the group.   Bion

(1961) refers to this situation using the term "dual of baD". In this case it is always "the most psychiatrically disturbed" members that emerges as the group leader.

The group dominated by the baD is characterized thus by primitive idealization, greed, denial, envy, and other defense processes described by Melanie Klein (1955) as characterizing the early psychotic (especially the paranoid-schizoid) positions. The leader is target to group's envy for his/her knowledge, skill, awareness of the unconscious processes experienced by the group, and his/her capacity to tolerate these processes. The leader's effective interpretations are envied, and attempts to devaluate and destroy them are thus made, very often in a form of resistance, by the group when the latter reacts negatively to their dependency demands.

The baD group structure is also characterized by the fact that there is little overt interaction between the individuals and, on the other hand, a belief that each individual has an exclusive relationship with the leader. As put by Bion (1961), the *"leader need not be identified with any individual in the group; it needs not be a person at all but may be identified with an idea or an inanimate object"* (p. 155), such as the group's history, recorded by the group, and made into a bible to which appeal is made. This bible-making is observed especially when the leader has already proved his/her human inability to meet in a satisfactory way the group's needs for care and nurturing.

Basic Assumption of Fight/Flight (baF): Although fight and flight are usually understood as two opposite behaviors, Bion has joined them together conceiving them as two sides of the same coin, or assumption. The baF group functions under the assumption that the group has met to fight or flee someone or something perceived as a threat to the group's preservation (annihilation dread). Therefore, whether for fighting or for fleeing, action is indispensable for the baF group. The group sessions are thus more animated; the group atmosphere is characterized alternately by 1) suspicion, criticism, verbal aggression (fight), and 2) passive resistance towards the therapist, (or the phantasmic enemy), or withdrawal from the group task in form of long silence (flight), or by engaging in activities unrelated to the group's basic task. Depending on whether it is observed in the baD or baF, the silence has different meanings. In the former case, it is an expression of the group dependency and belief that they have nothing to contribute to the group whose whole functioning should be taken in charge by the leader; *"we don't know anything, we are unable to function by ourselves without help"* constitutes the rational behind the silence. Whereas in the baF group, silence fulfils a resistance function; *"why do we need (or why are we obliged) to cooperate"* is the common emotional reaction in the group.

In the baF, the importance of the individual is secondary compared with that of the

whole group. Unlike in the baD where the sickest is valued, in the baF the individual may be sacrificed for the group survival. There is pressure on the individual to confirm; deviance from the group is perceived as a threat, and may be counteracted by the group resorting to aggressive control and scapegoating of the deviant member. Similarly, Kernberg (1980) writes that the group *"cannot tolerate any opposition to the ideology shared by the majority of its members"* (p. 213), which leads often to the emergence of antagonist subgroups.

The need for and the presence of a leader is more important than in any other ba group. For action, to be carried out, requires leadership. Therefore, leaders are thus selected for their ability to direct and mobilize the group in their fight with or flight from the vaguely perceived external or internal enemies. They are thus expected to recognize the danger and enemies, or create them if they are not available in the here-and-now of the group. As a matter of fact, the leader is expected 1) to be devoted to the preservation of the group as a whole by ignoring individual reactions, 2) to represent and promote courage and self-sacrifice, and be hateful of the enemy. Any leader who does not match this group image will be ignored and replaced by a more suitable one. The most prevailing defense mechanisms are splitting (the we-good-group, and the bad-others), and projective identification.

Basic Assumption of Pairing (baP): The third basic assumption is the least understood one. One of the reason for that is the ambiguous and misleading term used by Bion to refer to it. That is, the term "pairing" put emphasis more on the pair than on the content of the group phantasy. For it is not the pair that is important, but the phantasy that had led to its emergence. This emphasis on the pair has misled, for instance, the Japanese translator(s) of Bion's work to a point that "pairing" was translated by "pair" or *tsugai* in Japanese. The ambiguity of this term has led Kets de Vries and Miller (1984), for instance, to use instead of baP, the concept of *utopian*.

The assumption shared by the group here is that survival and preservation depends on whether the group is able of self-reproduction by "giving birth" to a new, and as yet unborn leader, a Messiah. This hoped-for-Messiah which need not be a person — it can be an idea, a plan, a proposition, an utopia, etc. — is expected to save the group from their anxieties and fears related to the baD and baF. Therefore, when the group is experiencing the baP, one has the impression that the group behaves "as if" it has met for purposes of reproduction. The creation of the *Messiah* is assigned by the group to two of its members, a pair (not necessary heterosexual). The group focus thus on the pair, hoping that their magical "sexual" union will give birth to the hoped-for-Messiah or savor-leader.

Therefore, unlike in the baD and baF, the group atmosphere is pervaded by an air

of hopeful expectation, euphoria, optimism, intimacy, and soft and agreeable feel-
ings. According to Bion (1961), the group hopeful expectation is verbally expressed,
for instance, in

> "ideas that marriage would put an end to neurotic disabilities; that group therapy
> would revolutionarize society when it had spread sufficiently; that the coming sea-
> son, spring, summer, autumn, or winter, as the case may be, will be more agree-
> able; that some new kind of community—an improved group—should be developed,
> and so on." (p. 151)

This focus on future events by having hopes should be interpreted as an indicator
of the presence of the baP, even if other elements are absent (the presence of the pair
for instance), it should not be mistaken with the future-oriented behavior and activity
observed also in the case of the work group. For the messianic hope in itself, not its
realization, is the aim of the group. Moreover, since the aim of the group is the mes-
sianic hope, this hope should no be satisfied. If this hope is satisfied, and the hoped-
for-leader is thus born, there would not be hope. For the hoped-for-leader will
inevitably fail in his salvation task, leaving the group with their anxieties and fears,
and, consequently, without hope. As put by Bion (1961) *"only by remaining a hope
does hope exist"* (p.151). The fears of and for the *Messiah* characterizing the baP
group can be easily understood, if one considers the number of examples in human
history that show how new leaders were persecuted, and rejected by their social envi-
ronment. This explains also why, as the french proverb says, *"Nul n'est prophete dans
son pays"* (no one is prophet in his country).

Despite their differences the basic assumptions have some characteristics in com-
mon. In contrast to work group, the basic assumption (ba) group , with its three
variations (baD, baF, and baP), is not based on, or oriented towards reality; it is
rather based on and toward phantasy, which the group uncritically acts out. There is
therefore no room for reality-testing, or experimentation in the ba group which is
characterized by 1) the fact that the group does not consider the consequences of its
behavior, 2) a lack of toleration of scientific or inquiring attitude; 3) an inability to
learn from experience, 4) a great insistence on emotions (anxiety, fear, hate, love and
the like), 5) a disturbed relationship to time, and 6) a lack of any process of devel-
opment. Concerning the two latter characteristics, Bion (1961) writes that:

> *"Time plays no part in it (ba group); it is a dimension of mental function that
> is not recognized...The second characteristics...is the absence of any process of de-
> velopment...stimuli to development meet with a hostile response...If a group wishes
> to prevent development, the simplest way to do so is to allow itself to be over-
> whelmed by basic assumption mentality and thus become approximated to the one*

kind of mental life in which a capacity for development is not required..." (p. 159).

Furthermore, the three basic assumptions share another feature, namely, an hypotrophied capacity for verbal communication. As put by Bion (1961), the more the group is overwhelmed by the ba group, the less it is unable to make any rational use of verbal communication. Words become a mere *vehicle for sound*. Unlike in the work group, the language in the ba group lacks precision and coherence, and is full of *clichés*, unfinished and repetitive phrases. The impression one has, when observing a group operating under the ba group, is that people speak to say nothing or anything. Individual interventions are often made only to interrupt the silence, and inflate the group to explode it (see Hafsi, 1999a, 1999b).

Moreover, what bounds the individual to the ba group is *valency*. Bion (1961) defines it as "*the individual's readiness to enter into combination with the group in making and acting the basic assumptions*" . Being an inherent part of human behavior, valency is spontaneous and instinctive, requiring no effort, and no training. There are as much *valency* types as basic assumptions. Moreover, individuals have not only different levels of *valency* (from high to low), but also different types of valency. For some, their principal *valency* is for fight/flight, some for dependency, and some for pairing. It is noteworthy that this does not mean that one has only one *valency*. Every human is capable of all the valencies, but one is usually at ease with only one type of *valency*. The difference between *valency* and *cooperation* is that the latter requires individual maturity, thought, training, and the former requires, as mentioned above, none of these characteristics.

GROUP MENTALITY AND GROUP CULTURE

After this brief introduction to some of Bion's basic concepts, I will now turn to the main concept of the present paper, namely, *group mentality*, and its correlative one, *group culture*. It is very difficult to grasp the meaning of what Bion (1961) has called *group mentality* and *group culture*. This difficulty is due to the fact that neither Bion nor other researchers have written in length about these concepts. Moreover, in spite of the clinical and theoretical importance of these concepts (especially the former), Bion mentions them only few times in his *Experiences in Groups*. Nevertheless, according to Bion, individual contributions or expressions (verbal and non-verbal) within a group serve as indicators of the person's own personality, and also the conception he/she has of the group, and of how the group should function. Some contributions are made overtly, recognized, and meant to be the contributor's own feeling,

and opinion. Some others (which include hostility and aggression) are made anony-
mously, with each member refusing to personally identify with them. Therefore, the
group provides its members with means by which these anonymous contributions are
made, laying the foundations for a system that makes possible individual evasion and
denial. Only a close examination of the group's mental life can lead to the discovery
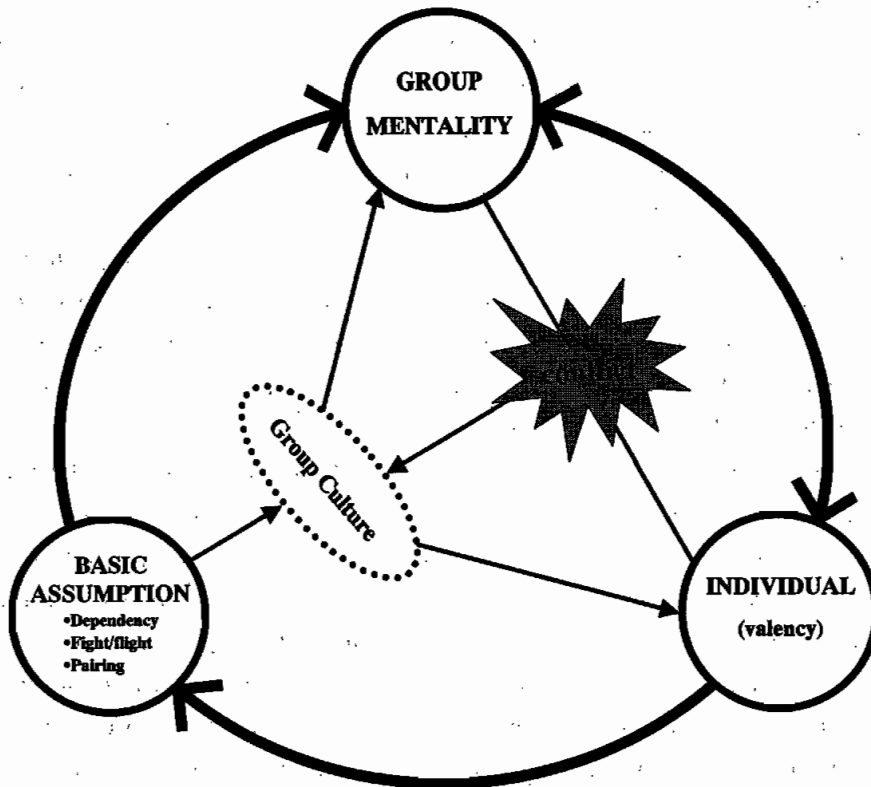of the means allowing these anonymous contributions.

**Figure 1. The Relationship between Basic Assumption, Group Mentality,
Individual, and Group Culture**

Developing further this idea, Bion (1961) first postulates the existence of a *group
mentality*, defining it "*as the pool to which the anonymous contributions are made,
and through which the impulses and desires implicit in these contributions are grati-
fied.*" (p. 50). However, each contribution, to be accepted as such, must conform to
other anonymous contributions of the group. For, *group mentality* is characterized by
"conformity" which is opposed to "diversity" of thought characterizing the mentality
of the individuals whose contributions have led to its formation. In other words, once
formed group mentality, as postulated by Bion, is experienced by the individual mem-
ber of the group as an obstacle to the fulfilment of one's personal aim and desire.

It is noteworthy that this first definition of group mentality applies only to the condition characterized by conformity; it describes a type of individual-group relationship which is conflict-free. In this type of relationship the individual conforms and is willing to contribute to the pool put at his/her disposition by the group. However, this does not apply to the case when the individual member displays disconfirmity, entering in conflict with the group mentality. Therefore, Bion reformulated this definition integrating the concept of *basic assumption group*, in the following:

> *"Group mentality is the unanimous expression of the will of the group, contributed to by the individual in ways of which he is unaware, influencing him disagreeably whenever he thinks or behaves in a manner at variance with the basic assumptions. It is thus a machinery of intercommunication that is designed to ensure that the group life is in accordance with the basic assumptions."* (p. 65).

The *group mentality* may thus oppose the desires and aims of the group members, leading therefore to an avoidable paradoxical situation. Bion explains that this paradoxical situation is due to the fact that the group is expected to be potentially capable of providing satisfaction for a number of the individual's needs, but this power of the group is challenged by the *group mentality*.

In order to meet this challenge, the group resorts to the elaboration of a characteristic *group culture*. Bion (1961) uses the term of *group culture* including *"in it the structure which the group achieves at any given moment, the occupations it pursues, and the organization it adopts."* (p. 55), and regards it as *"a function of the conflict between the individual's desires and the group mentality."* (p. 66). In other words, *group culture* can be understood as a means for the mediation between the individual within the group and the group as a whole, reducing the conflict between them, a conflict without which *group culture* will not emerge, and *group mentality* will not be easily discerned.

As indicated in Figure 1, both, *group mentality* and *group culture* reflect the underlying basic assumption to which the individual contributes through his/her valency. Moreover, *group mentality* and *group culture* can be thus of a fight/flight, dependency, or pairing type. To conclude, it is noteworthy that, as put by Bion, these group phenomena are only occasionally observed in a clear way, and the fact that the observer is emotionally involved in the group makes their recognition even more difficult.

SOME EXPRESSIONS OF GROUP MENTALITY

From the previous definition of group mentality we know that it corresponds to the expression of the group's will to function following the norms inherent in the basic assumption group. However, what neither Bion, nor those influenced by his work, have

discussed is the method(s) through which this will is expressed. In other words, Bion's definition focus solely on the nature of group mentality (*being an expression of...*), saying a little about the means used by the group to express it. This may be partly due to the difficulty, encountered by Bion (1961), to "find any method of describing" group mentality" that can give the reader a clear picture of what he meant by this concept. His resort to extracts from clinical examples did not satisfy even him.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to attempt to describe some of the methods used in D-groups to express the group's will (group mentality), and counteract individual deviancy from the group's dominant basic assumption. As previously mentioned, group mentality enters in action and become observable only when the individual displays a behavior, thought, or belief in variance with the group's basic assumption. For its function is, as discussed previously, to attempt to make the deviant conform to the group's will or norms. This idea is also shared by early social psychologist studying the influence of the majority, deviance and conformity (see, among others, Festinger, 1950; Schachter, 1951). According to my experience with D-groups, individual deviance is very often dealt with by the group mentality, by resorting to six main methods, namely, rejection by prohibition, ignorance, "pliers" method, negative echoing, myth, and silence. Using, clinical vignettes, I will now attempt to discuss each of these methods.

Rejection by prohibition (after devaluation)

Groups use a number of direct rejective means to say to and let the deviant feel that his/her behavior, or attitude is unfit to the group mentality, and, therefore, invite him/her to refrain from displaying it in the group. In this case, groups resort to a prohibitory language:"this runs counter the rules, or the aim of the group, you should not do it, or say it" is an example of how the group (through one of its member, very often the leader) would address the deviant member. The term "deviant", is used here as a general concept which includes not only the outspoken dissident member, but also the silent and passive member, for both are usually evaluated as unfit to the group. The former is regarded as unfit for his/her disruptive or opposite ideas and behavior, and the latter for his/her lack of contribution and cooperation.

It is noteworthy that this kind of group reaction depends on the group's development phase, and both the then-leader's and the deviant's personality and valency. That, is, the group resorts to this kind of means (rejection by prohibition) when dominated by what Bion calls the fight/flight basic assumption which is characterized by a high cohesiveness, and directive leadership. The following clinical vignette illustrates this kind of rejection.

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

In the third session, the group (9 men and 8 women) spent a large part of the time operating under the basic assumption of fight/flight with the therapist (Th.) as the principal opponent. The latter was reproached by the then-leader (A)or being too critical of the group, and disturbing its functioning as a result of his interventions, and interpretations. Supported by the group's silence of approval, the leader stated it clearly that the group can function without the therapist. Sensing that the latter was not ready to refrain from his interpretative function, the whole group withdrew then into a defensive silence, a kind of silence characterizing the hunter waiting from a prey. The therapist's first impression of the group was that of a "bomb, waiting for the right opportunity to explode". The opportunity was provided to them by one of the participants (N.) who has until now tried to distance himself from the group's fight/flight culture.

O.: Since nobody wants to speak, I would like to ask the group a favor...It's a personal matter. (Addressing the therapist) I don't know if I am allowed to speak about personal matters in the group. Can I ?

A.: (Before the therapist could even open his mouth, in a defiant voice) Of course
     you can ...We are supposed to speak our mind here, aren't we?

O.: ...Well, I would like to ask the group a favor...I am a member of the Sokagakkai religious sect. We are organizing an International Peace Youth Festival in Osaka which will be attended by many famous leaders who have fought for international peace, such as the Russian Gorbachev, and the Chinese Kim Yong. We want to show the participants how we have been working and making efforts for internal peace...we need their encouragements...we need other people's encouragements too...We would like to present a petition, so, if possible, I would like to ask all of you to write me a brief peace message...

A.: May be it is not my business (meaning its the therapist's responsibility), but
     I think it (the group) is not a place where you are supposed to talk about
     religion or religious matters.

O.: Why ? What do you mean ?

N.: I don't know exactly who does think this way, and why this matter is inappro-
     priate here (note the anonymous character of group mentality), personally I
     don't care...I have some friends who do the same thing (religious activity)...
     but, I think you had better not talking about these matters here...you have to
     think about the university's color (a metaphor meaning the university's

attitude towards political and religious gathering and propaganda)...So my advice is "avoid troubles !".

O.: Thanks for your advice...

N.: This (talking publicly about one's religious orientation) may lead you to (physical) troubles, everything is possible in this world.... Of course, your parents may also bear the consequences too...My friends' parents also received many threatening letters. From whom ? we don't know...So, you shouldn't talk about these matters here.

O.: Thanks for your advice...

The group's rejective reaction is not, like in this case, always direct. When cohesive enough, or when the deviant is one of its influential members, the group may resort to more subtle means of rejection. One of the most frequently observed way to reject opposite opinions or ideas is through joke. Examples illustrating this tendency are numerous; the following interaction, which was quoted by Brown (1988), is very illustrative. The content of the interaction corresponds to the actual sound recording of the final few minutes conversation (before the crash) which took place between the captain (John), his co-pilot and the flight engineer.

Captain: (*in a relaxed voice*) Well, we know where we are; we're all right.

Engineer: The boss has got it wired.

Co-pilot: I hope so.

Captain: No problem.

Co-pilot: (*cautiously*) Isn't this little faster than you normally fly this John?

Captain: (*confidently*) Oh yeah, but it's nice and smooth. We're going to get in right time. May be a little ahead of time. We've got it made.

Co-pilot: (*uncertainly*) I sure hope so.

Engineer: You know, John, do you know the difference between a duck and a co-pilot ?

Captain: What's the difference ?

Engineer: Well a duck can fly !

Captain: Well said !

(Pause of several seconds.)

Co-pilot: (*anxiously*) Seems like there's a bit of a tailwind up here, John.

Captain: Yeah, we're saving gas —helps us to get in a couple of minutes early too. (Another pause.)

Co-pilot: John, you're just a little below the MDA here.

Captain: Yeah, well we'll take care of it here.

This recording describes a conflictual situation opposing the group mentality domi-
nated by the basic assumption of dependency, and a member who attempts to propose,
vainly, work group activity to the group.   It shows how the group uses joke as a
method to counter, reject, and convince the dissident co-pilot of the rightness of the
group basic assumption.

The "pliers" method

This method, which I have observed many times, is used by the group to first iso-
late the deviant from the group, and then press or "pinch" him/her to withdraw a
statement or refrain from displaying his/her disagreement with the group and the
dominant basic assumption. The group resorts to this way of group mentality expres-
sion when it is under the influence of baF, is experiencing a visible lack of cohesion,
and the member are unable to find an external object onto whom to project the "bad"
group (Ganzarain, 1989).   When a given member displays signs of deviance from the
dominant basic assumption,   the group jumps on the occasion to forget their diffe-
rences,   "close up" "as if" to detach the deviant from the group,   and then start to
"bombard him/her with questions, reproaches, and criticism. The group can be visuali-
zed and described as two fingers pressing an object.   The author observed this kind of
group behavior a number of times without giving it much attention, until a D-group
participant attract the author's attention to it.   This participant, who in one session
found himself in a deviant position, describing his experience, reported that he "felt
like trapped between the pliers jaws".   Owing to this participant's (N.) statement, the
author became aware of this way of group mentality expression, and named it "pliers
method".   Giving it a name helped him to distinguish it from other methods used by
the group, and interpret it each time he observes it.   The following is a fragment of
a session describing a situation where N. was subjected to this way of group mentality
expression.

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

The session was nearing the end. The group has been engaged in a long discus-
sion about the usefulness and rightness of the presence of a Self-Defense Force in
Japan. Although most of the participants individually defended the presence of
this force, arguing that Japan has many (foreign) enemies, so she should be pre-
pared to defend herself, the therapist did not feel, at that time, that this opinion
was the group's one.   In other words, the underlying basic assumption of

fight/flight was not enough strong to be differentiate and recognized. As put by Bion, it was still confined to a protomental existence, until it was stimulated and activated by one of the participants (N.), who dared display his disagreement with the majority's opinion. In a voice so faint that he could barely be heard, N. said that he was against the presence of a seldefense force, and the possession of any kind of weapons, because possessing weapons will lead to war, killing of other people and destruction of other countries. He concluded that, whatever the reason he was against the dispatching of the Japanese Seldefense team abroad. This statement had a catalytic effect on the group. That is, the group, which was, until now, like a pile of detached puzzle pieces, suddenly became a finished puzzle with one piece lacking, namely, N.; a group mentality was thus born. The group start then to bombard N. with questions, transforming the session into a court. Discussing latter this experience, N. reported that "each question was like a pressure by a pliers". This painful experienced lasted until N., was finally drawn to soften his position saying: " I've been listening to all of you, and I have to admit that there are different ways to think about the Self-defense Force in Japan...So I think that it is inevitable to possess a certain minimum of weapons...".

Rejection by ignorance

To express its will the group may resort also to what may be called *rejection by ignorance* of the deviant's interventions, comments and behavior, making him/her feel that his/her contributions not only do not interest, but disturb also the group. The group would behave "as if" the deviant member does not exist, by reducing verbal interaction with him/her to a strict minimum, and, whenever possible, refraining from giving him/her the opportunity to express him/herself. When he/she manages to express his/herself, his/her ideas, opinions, and questions are often subtly ignored, or avoided. The following excerpt from a session of D-group, attended by 16 participants (7 men, and 9 women) is very illustrative.

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

The group was operating under the basic assumption of pairing, that is characterized by intimacy, optimism, and especially hope to find the "right method" (messianic method) which will help the group to function as a "good group", and save them from the boredom of the session. The deviant (D.) addressed the group saying that they were spending their time in futile discussion, that they are not progressing, reminding them that the aim of the group is to study about group

dynamics in the here-and-now. He then said that he had an idea about how to get out of the "merry-go-around" situation (a word used previously by the therapist in one of his interpretative interventions). The group did not seem to understand what and why he was saying it. One of the "pair" who has been monopolizing the discussion, responded, in a rather annoyed and angry voice, saying that "D.'s statement reflects his personal opinion and not the one of the whole group. Therefore, before providing him (D.)with the opportunity to talk about his idea, I want to ask the group whether they share his feeling or not...I want to know if the group think that we have been spending our time in futile discussion...I want to hear everyone's opinion first...". Then he invite the group to express, clockwise, their opinions. The group spent most of the session repeating, with different words, what was previously said in other sessions. There was nothing new. Meanwhile, D. was listening, waiting for his turn to present his idea. However, when his turn finally came, he seemed so bored, and angry, for having been made waiting, that he said that he had forgotten what he was going to propose to the group and that he does not care anymore. The therapist interpreted that the group were afraid of the change that D.'s idea may bring to the group. Therefore, they have manage to neutralize him, by first not letting him express his idea, and that the group discussion was only a means to gain time, and discourage D, making him forget his need for change and development. This interpretation was neither welcomed, nor rejected as strongly as previous ones. However, the then-leader's "may be yes, but that was not the group's conscious intention" was, for the therapist, a clear prediction of the future changes that were going to be experienced by the group in the next session.

Negative echoing

This way of will expression consists in devoting most of the session time to listen carefully to the deviant's story, or interpretation of facts, so that one has the feeling that the group is open to and agrees with it, and even tries to identify with, and echo it . At first glance, the group seems to be characterized by tolerance of differences. However this mental state corresponds to only the beginning of a rejection process which may be referred to as "negative echoing". This process consists first in identifying with the deviant idea (story, opinion, etc.), and then using it to demonstrate the inadequacy of the deviant's behavior, and the rightness of the group's basic assumption. Metaphorically speaking, this process consists in "using the enemy's weapon against this enemy".

This process resembles the "as-if" emotional response, first coined by Deutsch

(1942), and applied by Malcolm (1992) to the patient's reaction to analysis. The latter argued that this "as-if" reaction can be displayed by most, if not all, patients in analysis, as a resistance against insight and change which the analyst attempts to bring. According to Malcolm, the aim of this "as-ifness" is "keeping an appearance of an analysis in progress, while the patient's main objective will be to keep the situation immobilized. A static situation acts for these people as a kind of reassurance, a kind of proof that they are all right, do not need any change. (p. 114).

This clinical situation is also discussed by Bion (1963), using the term of "reversible perspective", and examining this reaction in the light of his ideas on mating of a preconception with a realization, and minus links (-L, -H, and -K). To illustrate what he meant by reversible perspective, Bion gives the example of two people who would agree about the disposition of lines, light, and shade, but would see different things (one, a vase, and the other two faces) while believing that they are seeing the same thing. In the case of the patient-analyst relationship, the patient accepts the interprepretation, but rejects the premises. That is, the patient accepts the analyst's interpretation he/she has actually neutralized or emptied it of its meaning and substance. This applies also to the case of the deviant-group (mentality) relationship.

This clinical group situation may be very difficult to understand for someone who has never come across this way of expression of the group mentality. Therefore, the author will try now to provide a clinical vignette that may illustrate what is meant by the "negative echoing" here.

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

The following material is from a D-group constituted of sixteen (8 women, and 8 men) students. The group was operating under the basic assumption of fight/flight when one participant (E.) reported that she was given a ride on a bicycle by a stranger (Messiah), helping her to get at time to school and enter her examination. The group identified with E., supporting and helping her to develop in more details her love story. First, the therapist thought that the group's fight/flight basic assumption was been replaced by the pairing one with its characteristic feelings, namely, intimacy, euphoria, and optimism. However, this change did not correspondent to a lasting phenomenon. For the then-fight/flight leader (M.) soon launched a counterattack by releasing the echoing process. Using the same theme of 'a pair riding a bicycle', he thus reported the following episode:

M.: ...Well, it is an old story...when I was in high school, we, my friend and I, used to ride on the same bicycle...One day he came to my house, and stayed

overnight. The next day he wanted me to go with him to school by bicycle. That was the end of the second semester. It was snowing. I sat in the front, and my friend in the back of the bicycle. I was driving, but I did not know that the brake was broken...We were sloping down very fast, when my friend suddenly asked me to turn to curve down to the left . It was snowing, so we slipped, and unfortunately, jumped over the fence...As a result, I had a broken arm and a broken tooth...That was few minutes before going to school...Since then I believe that one should not ride a bicycle with another person...

As shown by this clinical vignette, the group, represented by M., used a similar theme, a pair riding a bicycle, to express the group mentality and tell a different story that demonstrate the danger of operating under the pairing basic assumption. By proceeding in this way, the group tried thus to remind E. that they are not ready yet for a change from the baF to the baP, and that she must, consequently conform to the norms, or she will risk to have "a broken arm and tooth". The threat contained in the story is characteristic of all the ways of expression used by the group mentality.   In other words, each expression of group mentality hides an "or else", similar to the one discussed by Cashdan (1988), and Hafsi (1993 and 1995) in relation to projective identification. Whether a receptor of the projective identification or a deviant, the threat is the same, "conform or you don't exist for me (in the projective identification), or for the group (in the case of the group mentality)".

Myth creation

Myth may be also used by the group to counteract the deviant's ideas, and express their will to continue functioning under the already dominant basic assumption, and keep thus the status quo. To put it concretely, the group selects a myth that reflects their will and discuss about it in the session. Therefore, a close examination of the content of the myth reveals what the group is willing to communicate to the deviant.

Myth, its meaning, and the role it plays in human psyche, has always attracted the attention of psychoanalysts. For instance, the myth of the king Oedipus helped Freud to develop his Oedipus Complex theory. In this sense, the Oedipus myth "may be considered as the tool which was used in the discovery of psychoanalysis"(Bléandonu, 1994; p.184). Melanie Klein (1963) also turned to the study of myth (*some reflections on the oresteia*), applying her theory on early developmental stages and their characteristic psychotic (paranoid-schizoid, and depressive) positions with their prevailing anxiety, fears and defense processes. Bion approached the study of myth from a different vertex, namely that of "knowing". He first argued the main theme concealed in

the Oedipus myth is "an intellectual epic quest", or man's curiosity, and desire to know (K link), about himself, and then applied this idea to other myths such as the Garden of Eden, the Tower of Babel, and Narcissus. According to Bion, what characterized these three myths is a common link to the activity of knowing, and its prohibition by a god or a fate.

Hence, in spite of their differences, both Freud and Bion have discussed the myth from principally the *actor*'s (the "deviant" individual) and not from the producer, namely, the group's vertex, providing their readers with almost no information about the function fulfilled by myth for the group.

Therefore, without pretending to provide an answer to this question, the author has developed the hypothesis that one of the functions of the myth in the group is serving as a vehicle for the group mentality. The group resorts to the myth to express their will to see the deviant refraining from behaving in disagreement with the prevailing basic assumption. According to the author's experience, the group makes use of two types of myth in its attempts to influence the deviant. The first type, or *defensive myth*, is a myth centered on the prohibition of a given behavior, attitude, or belief. This prohibited act in the myth usually bears strong resemblance to the deviant's here-and-now behavior. The message transmitted by this type of myth is "don't do it (the prohibited act), otherwise you will have to bear the consequences", just like the personage in the myth. The meta-message, is "you are disturbing the group, or your behavior is inappropriate, so, refrain from displaying it, if you don't want to bear the consequences of your act". In other words, the deviant is perceived as the sole to blame, and the myth is used to put pressure on him/her so that he/she conforms to the group's basic assumption.

The other type of myth the group resorts to is referred to as *praise myth*. The central theme of the myth here is the group's praise. The group selects a myth that idealizes and favors the group, by highly evaluating its origins, strength, cohesiveness, and the role played by the group in the individual's well-being and development. The group size in the myth has a minor importance here; the group here designates two persons, a tribe, or even a nation. The aim of the group using this type of myth is to rise a feeling of guilt in the deviant, by showing or demonstrating to him/her how the group is good, above criticism, and indispensable. To put it differently, the group resorts to what may be called "emotional blackmail" of the deviant. The meta-message the group tries to convey, here, through the discussion about the myth is that the group is so perfect that ingratitude is inconceivable. "One should be crazy to display an act of ingratitude" is a belief the group wants the deviant to share.

The following extract from a session is an example of a group resorting to a

defensive myth to counteract the deviance of a member from the baD.

CLINICAL VIGNETTE

From the beginning of the session, the deviant member (E.) has been trying to show the group that he was not willing to contribute to their basic assumption of dependency, through a number of acting outs. He was very excited; he spent the first ten minutes of the session making noise by rocking on his chair, and sometimes stops rocking to cast a glance at the window, or to mimic the therapist' gestures, suggesting that he was the experimenter, and the group the subjects. It was clear that he was trying to demonstrate how bored, unconcerned, and different from the rest of the group he was. During E.'s acting out, the group was, under the highly directive nurturing leadership of K. (a girl), discussing about futile topics, such as movie stars, and singers. The futility of the subjects being discussed, the group's passivity and dependency, and their poor verbal communication at that moment constituted a clear evidence that the group was operating under the basic assumption of dependency. To the group's surprise, E. left the room alleging that he was going to the rest room. When he came back, few minutes later, the group was still functioning under the same basic assumption. He then sat down and began to examine up-down the therapist in a provocative way, when suddenly the leader (K.) brought in the fictitious story of HANAKO, pretending that she was the real "creator" of this "myth", but that she has been keeping it a secret because she was afraid that nobody would believe her. K.'s intervention had a remarkable effect on the group's cohesiveness. It unified the group around K, so that the therapist had, for the first time, the feeling that the group has become a kind of "whole", or to be precise, a "whole without E.". Consequently, the group commences to discuss a number of different and local versions of HANAKO story, which most of elementary school students in Japan believe in.

The story is about a female ghost, named HANAKO, which haunts school toilets. Most of elementary school children do not want to go alone to the toilets at certain time of the day, owing to the fear of being swallowed and annihilated by HANAKO. It is noteworthy that these fears have for prototype those characterizing the early psychotic positions (especially the paranoid-schizoid position) described by Melanie Klein (1955).

The therapist interpreted that, as the group's representative, K. was irritated by E.'s counterdependent behavior, and fight/flight attitude towards the group including the therapist. Therefore, K. brought in the HANAKO myth to warn E.

that his behavior (going to the toilets during the session, for instance), is inappropriate, and threaten him, that is, telling him that he may run the risk of being targeted, swallowed, and annihilated by the HANAKO-group.

This interpretation was neither denied, nor approved by the group at that time. However, it stirred a strong denial reaction in E., but it did not last long. As a result, a remarkable change in his attitude was observed in the next session. He was more willing to adjust to the group's basic assumption, by actively participating in the group discussion, and even serving as a temporary leader.

Communicative silence

There is a large number of studies that have treated the topic of silence in different situations, domains, and cultures. Many authors have discussed their conceptions of its nature, and the functions it fulfills for both the silent person and his/her interlocutor (e.g., Bruneau, 1973; Poyatos, 1981; Scott, 1972; Johannesen, 1974; Meerloo, 1975; Jaworski, 1993). Most of these authors share the belief that silence is not merely the antithesis of communication, but a kind of non-verbal communication means. In other words, with the exception of muteness, silence is believed to have a communicative function, and a message that can be understood if the context is taken into consideration.

In a group situation silence is usually used also by the group as a means to express and impose its will, or mentality in case of conflict. Depending on the dominant basic assumption, the group may keep silence to communicate to the opponent (the therapist, the leader, or the trainer) that they are unable to function by themselves without help, in the case of dependency. Silence may be also used to remind the deviant that he/she is behaving counter the group's basic assumption, and consequently try to silence him/her, when the group is functioning under the basic assumption of fight/flight. Here are two examples of silence observed in a D-group situation.

CLINICAL VIGNETTES

Example 1: The group was functioning under the basic assumption of dependency, seeking advice and instruction about what to do in the session, and asking questions, without translating the answers into action. In a few words, a lethargic climate was reigning in the group (G). One of the participants, K., who was manifestly displaying signs of uneasiness, anxiety and discomfort, wanted to remedy the situation intervening in the following:

A.: Let's ignore him (trainer)...let's do as if he was not here...how about play-
    ing *shiritori* (a Japanese traditional game)?

G.: (sudden silence).

A.: (hiding his face in his hands)...oh! only me...it's shameful!

Example 2: In the present example, the group was involved in the scapegoating
of one the participants (M.). They asked him for the reason why he missed the
previous session, but were not satisfied with his answer, arguing that was only a
pretext, and that the fact he could not wake up early applies to all of them.
After the questioning, the group turned to direct mockery, and jocks about M.'s
appearance, saying that he looked like a sleepy bear, and that his head was shaped
like an onion, because M. had said that he liked onion soup. Inspite of this direct
scapegoating, M. did not counterreact, and kept smiling meanwhile; a smile that
hided anger, anxiety, and feeling of loss, mother-group loss. It was clear from the
group's behavior that the latter was under the influence of the basic assumption
of fight/flight. Of course, not the whole group was engaged in acting out this
basic assumption. One the subgroup that was passively observing M.'s
scapegoating, K. was manifestly not satisfied with the group's behavior towards
M., and the fact that the group has forgot its task, the one they have previously
set. When his toleration capacity had reached its limit, K. confronted the group
in the following:

K.: I think we have been wasting our time since the begining of the session by
paying too much attention to M...I think we should not forget the group task...we
are here to think and learn about group dynamics, aren't we ?...I think it's time
to decide what we have to do and how to do it as a group now, otherwise we will
waste our time.

G.: (sudden silence).

K.: I see...It doesn't seem that all people think the same way, do they?

These two examples demonstrates clearly the communicative power of silence. In
both cases the group has successfully managed to counteract the deviant's wish to see
the group changing, and to inform him that they are ready for fight/flight (example
1) or work (example 2), and wish to continue functioning under prevailing basic as-
sumption (dependency in example 1, and fight/flight in example 2).

As shown by the clinical vignettes and examples described in the present article, al-
beit their manifest differences, all the methods used by the group to express its will,
or mentality, have the same aim, namely, reintegrating the deviant member to the

group by means of direct or indirect pressure. If one take into consideration the fact that conflict does not always results in destruction but may also lead to progress through "catastrophic change" (Bion, 1961), intervening by interpreting the group mentality is indispensable for group development. Therefore, whenever group mentality manifests itself, and the group is at a stage where it can not deny it, it is indispensable to interpret it, so that the group-deviant conflict is verbalized and dealt with in the here-and-now. For, if the manifestation of group mentality is not interpreted, it will hinder the group process, and therefore, no real progress would be experienced by the group.

CONCLUSION

In the present paper, the author has tried to discuss Bion's concept of group mentality, or the unanimous expression of the group's desire and will. As pointed out by Bion, this concept should be differentiated from the one of group culture. For the former is the creation of the conscious/unconscious interaction of the members operating under the influence of one of the three basic assumptions, namely, baD, baF, baP, adumbrated by Bion (1961), and the latter is, to borrow Bion's words, the function of the conflict between the group and the individual's will and needs.

Hence, we have learned from Bion that the group has a mentality, which is always displayed whenever an individual fails to obey the rule of the basic assumption dominating the group's mental activity. However, Bion does not satisfy fully our curiosity or epistemic need, leaving us with the question of how the group mentality manifested itself.

To provide an answer to this question, the author has tried , based on his experience with D-groups, to discuss some of the means used by the group to express its will, or its group mentality as defined by Bion (1961), and neutralize any individual attempt of behave in opposition to the basic assumption group. Using clinical examples, the author discussed six of these methods, namely, rejection by prohibition, the pliers method, rejection by ignorance, negative echoing, myth creation, and communicative silence.

As discussed previously, the present paper is based on Bion's experiences in groups, and the spirit that animates it, a spirit that consists in providing, whenever possible, the reader with only unsaturated elements, which will become saturated only if they mate with an appropriate realization (Bion, 1970). Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to stimulate and encourage other group researchers to search for other methods used by the group to express group mentality. For detecting these methods will

help the group therapist, to intervene at the group level to help the group resolve the
group-individual conflict as soon as it becomes manifest, and helps it develop, and
function as a work group, even if for a while only.

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