GROUP THEORIES AS CON-TEXT OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY IN PARTICULAR AND GROUP WORK IN GENERAL[1]

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Summary

Taking as a point of reference man's relation to language, this paper tries to place theory as a typical language organization in Socioculture one of the cultures specified by Pat de Maré in his tri-partite theory of Bioculture, Socioculture and Koinonic Ethico Culture. The argument is put forth that this type of organization takes into account neither the relationship between theory and the libidinal disposition of the author nor the one existing between theory and the group of individuals upholding it; in other words, we do not count with the necessary instrument which would permit us a critical evaluation of the dynamics of love, aggression and power channelled through a particular theory. Theory, seen from this perspective is a symbolic context basically invariable which produces social groupings equally static and closed. To find a way out of this mortal impasse, we are in need of new concepts which do not ipso facto organize themselves in theories and, also, new social groupings which do not constitute themselves around a theory or with the only objective of advancing it. Finally a relationship is established between the questions raised here and the difficulty up to now of establishing a general group theory.

The subject of this paper is how we can think about the fast changing context of the society we live in and the challenge this represents for group therapists. A <u>context</u> is a text with which we read an occurrence or event, a text which permits us to give meaning. Context, according to the dictionary, means the parts of a sentence,

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paragraph, discourse, etc. immediately next to or surrounding a specific word or passage and determining its exact meaning. In this sense, a theory is a context. The concept of Oedipal Complex, castration, sublimation only have meaning in the context of psychoanalytic theory, the ones of matrix, network and law of group dynamics only have meaning in the context of group-analytic theory.

There is, then, a conceptual context, a symbolic whole which permits us to give meaning to the words we use to describe phenomena we observe. Being of symbolic order, this context situates the ideas in time. Once something is thought or written or heard, there is a before and an after. The dictionary also defines context as the whole situation, background or environment relevant to a particular event, personality, creation, etc. There is, then, also a perceptual context, an imaginary whole which permits us to situate a phenomenon in space, in the three dimensional space of our body, to situate it in perspective. Both contexts are inseparably interrelated, constituting the human context, the one which in the last instance gives account of what it means to be a human being. As beings endowed with language and with the capacity to talk, our relationship to language condemns us to give meaning, to explain ourselves, to give account of ourselves again and again. Our birth is marked by our entry into the symbolic universe of our predecessors and our culture. We are born as a fellow human being before we make use of our body and our speech.

As therapists we are interested in alleviating suffering. In times when the context was relatively stable one was born into a family, went to school, learnt a job, and raised a family in turn —therapy had a largely adaptive function, although allowing, as the case may be, for a minimum or maximum creative intervention on the part of the person in constructing his identity, the limits of his satisfactions and frustrations, etc. The question was, if and how much can an individual change? Can he be different to what his family, society and culture meant him to be? Psychoanalysis investigated these questions, and the answer is a relative yes. Psychoanalysis brings forward proof of the fact that man interacts with the world following the rules of his internalized relationships. Extrapolating the findings of psychoanalytic theory we can say that the world and the others are projections of our psychic reality and if we dominate the latter we can dominate the world. This, of course, leads us to an absolutely egocentric Weltanschauung. So far, man still hangs onto his narcissism! What could be more narcissistic than imagine everybody identifying with ones ego-ideal!

Under the circumstances of a relatively stable context, or at least a context whose homeostasis or "progressive development" is never questioned, group therapy was one more therapeutic instrument in a series used to alleviate the multitude of human ills, or what are considered to be ills in any given society. A clear imprint of its medical heritage. The group therapist has a theory, a body of knowledge about the possible dynamic relationships between the individual and the group, that is to say, the various groups in his society: Psychoanalysis in a group, psychoanalysis of the group, the group as a mother from whom the individual differentiate himself progressively etc. etc. are the leading ideas which permit the therapist to help people change. It also permits him to occupy the place of the one who knows which in turn he finds difficult to withdraw from. There exists a body of knowledge about how things ought to be and he is in direct contact with this theory or even is the author of it. The conviction that it is the individual who is author of an idea and therefore its proprietor persists.

The realization that it is the context which is changing and fast at that, brings us, I think, to an interesting turning point. As group workers it puts us in crisis. If we don't defend ourselves too much, we have to admit that not only people but also society and its institutions change: our theoretical context changes or at least becomes more and more diverse. In therapy we can still somehow muddle through. People normally find a more satisfactory way of getting on in life. In training these changes in the context bring us up against questions which are not so easily bypassed or answered and it is to these to which I wish to address myself in this paper.

Our group members in training see beyond the practical implications of our interventions. They ask us more about the basic questions in play than about the answers. The basic question has not changed: Who is man? What is the meaning of his life? The fast changing context, i.e. social context is indeed a challenge to group workers. It shows up that theoretical context largely favoured the individual's adjustment in society —an abstract entity.

This individual-centred view of man can be maintained as long as the social context, the culture, is supposed to have a progressive development, when only lip service is paid to the "artificial" isolation of individual and society and that content and object of mental life is of necessity constantly being modified by so-called "external" circumstances. The rapid change of the social context, on the one hand, shows up that group theory, to the present, managed to maintain the egocentric place of the individual in reference to the group and, on the other hand, that we are determined to a large extent by this fast changing context, which indeed supposes a challenge, perhaps a shock which stirs us from our complacency. May I remind you of what John Rickman said in a 1951 article: "The study of group dynamics shows us that more than children of our time we are its slaves, and we are dominated from out-side from a group power of which we are not conscious. So it happens that our narcissism receives yet another heavy blow and flinching before the scattering of yet another illusion, we will pull round us the consoling blanket of incomprehension and keep our minds engaged within the cosy circle of the family and its simple social derivatives.[2]
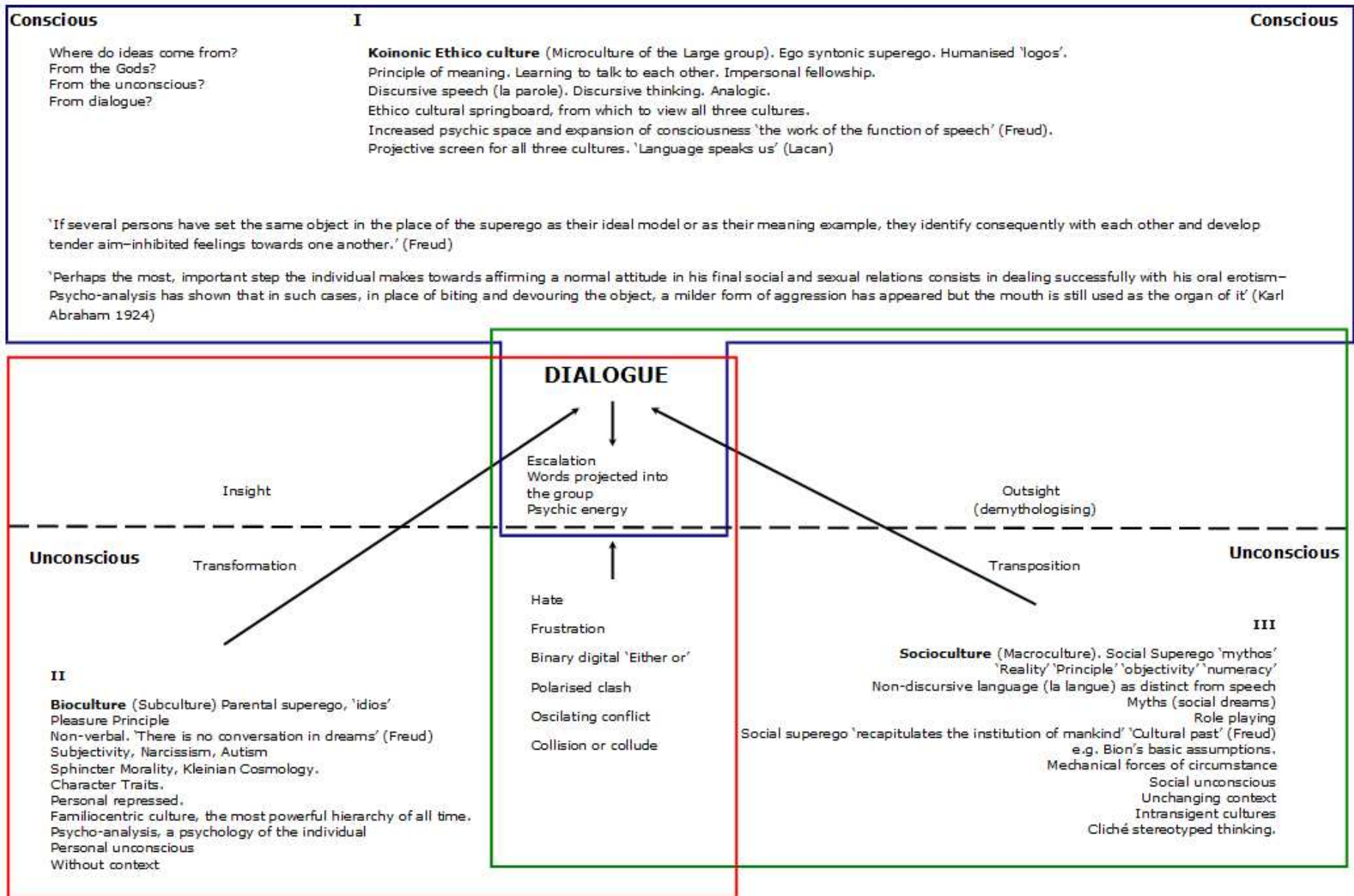
Intending to comprehend this very difficult social soul of man, I wish to examine group theory and the locus and function of the group analyst, two elements in mutual interdependence in the weaving of the context which gives meaning to man as a social being. As a guide I shall use Pat de Mare's scheme of the three cultures. My central point of reference is man's relationship to language.

Pat de Mare's diagram, I believe is unpublished. He made it available on the occasion of the Large Group of 350+ people he led during the 1985 London Spring Week-end taking the place of the yearly Foulkes Lecture. It's a complex diagram. The three Cultures, conceptualized by Dr. de Mare are the Bioculture, the Socioculture and the Koinonic Ethico Culture, the latter being a term coined by him.

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[2]   John Rickman, No. 52 Selected Contributions to Psycho-Analysis, The Hogarth Press, London, 1957, p. 221

THE THREE CULTURES

Conscious   I   **Conscious**

Where do ideas come from?   **Koinonic Ethico culture** (Microculture of the Large group). Ego syntonic superego. Humanised 'logos'.
From the Gods?   Principle of meaning. Learning to talk to each other. Impersonal fellowship.
From the unconscious?   Discursive speech (la parole). Discursive thinking. Analogic.
From dialogue?   Ethico cultural springboard, from which to view all three cultures.
                                                    Increased psychic space and expansion of consciousness 'the work of the function of speech' (Freud).
                                                    Projective screen for all three cultures. 'Language speaks us' (Lacan)

'If several persons have set the same object in the place of the superego as their ideal model or as their meaning example, they identify consequently with each other and develop tender aim-inhibited feelings towards one another.' (Freud)

'Perhaps the most, important step the individual makes towards affirming a normal attitude in his final social and sexual relations consists in dealing successfully with his oral erotism-Psycho-analysis has shown that in such cases, in place of biting and devouring the object, a milder form of aggression has appeared but the mouth is still used as the organ of it' (Karl Abraham 1924)

DIALOGUE

Escalation
Words projected into
the group
Psychic energy

Insight   Outsight
                                                                                                                  (demythologising)

Unconscious   **Unconscious**

Transformation   Transposition

Hate

Frustration   III

Binary digital 'Either or'   **Socioculture** (Macroculture). Social Superego 'mythos'
                                                                                       'Reality' 'Principle' 'objectivity' 'numeracy'
Polarised clash   Non-discursive language (la langue) as distinct from speech
                                                                                                    Myths (social dreams)
Oscilating conflict   Role playing
                                                   Social superego 'recapitulates the institution of mankind' 'Cultural past' (Freud)
Collision or collude   e.g. Bion's basic assumptions.
                                                                                              Mechanical forces of circumstance
II   Social unconscious
                                                                                                            Unchanging context
Bioculture (Subculture) Parental superego, 'idios'   Intransigent cultures
Pleasure Principle   Cliché stereotyped thinking.
Non-verbal. 'There is no conversation in dreams' (Freud)
Subjectivity, Narcissism, Autism
Sphincter Morality, Kleinian Cosmology.
Character Traits.
Personal repressed.
Familiocentric culture, the most powerful hierarchy of all time.
Psycho-analysis, a psychology of the individual
Personal unconscious
Without context

According to the author, Bioculture is a subculture related to "idios", to the personal, the family, the parental super-ego, it is ruled by sphincter morality and it is without context. Socioculture is macroculture, related to "mythos", to the social super-ego and the social unconscious; it has to do with intransigent culture, is basically an unchanging context and is ruled by the "reality principle". The Koinonic-Ethico Culture in turn is the microculture of the large group. Quoting the author: "Koinonia is a word coined in Ancient Greece, where in Sparta in an amphitheatre of 1400 seats people could still address each other being seated at the maximum distance of 200 feet. Koinonia refers to an atmosphere of impersonal fellowship rather than personal friendship, of spiritual-cum-human participation in which people can speak, hear, see and think freely". But, concretely, if I understand rightly, for Dr. de Mare it has to do with a course of drive development entirely distinct to the one of libido, ending up not in love but in friendship. It's a gradual transformation through dialogue of mutual hate generated in the group setting into impersonal fellowship of Koinonia. The Koinonic-Ethico Culture functions on the grounds of, what the author calls humanized "logos", the principle of meaning, and it is a ethico-cultural springboard for viewing the three Cultures. One of the author's question is, where do ideas come from? The Gods, the unconscious, or dialogue?

Culture is a bouillon of language, said Lacan. He thought and said a lot about language and little about groups. In the best of circumstances he considered the group an effect of language, like it produces an effect of meaning, of truth, of subject and object, of existence. This is due to the fact that Lacan, like almost everybody moves between the poles of Bioculture and Socioculture. Pat de Mare, to my mind, has the merit of having rescued the group from the bouillon of Socioculture. In Socioculture, language loses its root in the human being. The modern state, the sciences, the theories tell man what he is, what he ought to be and do. Statesmen, scientists, intellectuals and other people of fame lend their voices and personify the impossible, the "Other", the one who knows, what used to be and still is called God, the one who loves you and is able to make you complete. During the Sixth European Symposium of Group Analysis celebrated in Zagreb in September '84, in a paper on Dialogue and Discourse[3]. I developed the reciprocal relationship between dialogue, communication and the concept of the "Other". Suffice it to say that discursive speech ("la parôle") is essentially dialogue. We speak to someone who can speak, but particularly to someone who already has spoken, i.e. the one related to what is primarily repressed in us. Communication is established in talking with our fellow human beings, although in addressing him, we inevitably address this "Other" related to our "ex-sistence" in a symbolic universe, "ex-sistence" in the sense of our identity establishing itself beyond our body, in another place, the place of language.

Pat de Mare not only rescued the group from the bouillon of Socioculture, but in speaking about three cultures he permits us to differentiate three different boiling pots of language. We could think of man's relationship to language as marked by primarily different modes in each culture.

Man is born as a biological organism, a bodily whole, and being endowed with speech and inserted in language and the symbolic universe of his mother tongue and the culture of his

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[3]   Hanne Campos, "Dialogue and Discourse", paper presented at the 6th European Symposium of Group Analysis, Zagreb 1984.

society, he is born again as a divided subject: an I and a Self. It is language which introduces this split, producing the phenomenon of the unconscious which profoundly divides man.

Man's relation to language marks two facts:

1) The unconscious as the inexhaustible spring of passions and drives, the motor source, and

2) The process of identification as the pathway from being spoken by others to speaking in his own right, acceding to his own speech and word.

In Bioculture, language inscribes us; it gives us a place in the world of human beings. Our bodily characteristics are inscribed in our genes, our name inscribes us in our family lineage, and we are inscribed in the birth register occupying our first social position.

The mother is the primordial "Other", the author and owner of the language which gives us our first meaning, our first identity. As we have been thinking for some time now, our first ego is a body ego. Language, in all its aspects energizes our body. Language symbolises, in using our body, what is good, what is bad, pleasurable or hurtful, what inside and what outside, what can be expelled and what retained. Pat de Mare sums it up as a "sphincter morality". Language turns organismic functions into behaviour, esteemed or rejected by others. The language of Bioculture takes possession of our body, not only the sphincters but also the hands and eyes, hearing and everything, and interprets it according to conscious and unconscious values of our family and society, as accepted or rejected by the latter.

Bioculture, by inheritance or direct transmission, inscribes the traces of the foundation matrix of our identity. Foulkes in his one major psychoanalytic paper[4] treats the question of identification. The mechanism of identification is for Foulkes the intersection of id and superego development. Foulkes suggests that we use the term of identification for the Ego-side and introjection for the id-side of two psychological processes which are intertwined and not totally separable from each other. Interestingly enough, this conceptualization addresses itself to the same point which Lacan develops in his theory. Introjection is not only a necessary step towards sublimation but its direct forerunner.

Biocultura has no context, no text which allows giving it meaning. It is inscribed on diverse levels, but it's not articulated. Like the unconscious itself it is only susceptible to be articulated. Bioculture is idios, one's own. It also has to do with eidos, with image, with what is seen and with eidolon, an image without real existence, phantom, phantasy, an image susceptible to be articulated in language: and which, I would say, comes from language, that is why it has no real existence.

Bioculture finds its articulation in Socioculture through the different relationships between man and language. Speaking in his own name and particularly written language situates man in time —one word after the other, one trace after the other. Emerging as a subject precipitates him at the same time into the question of his being: Who am I? Where do I come from?, and where do I go to? Language permits him to use the 'I' without knowing who 'I' is. This leads Lacan to differentiate the subject of what is enunciated —the grammatical subject— from the subject who enunciates —the unconscious subject. That is, one can perfectly imagine a culture where language and organised discourse circulate without ever appearing an author of it or that ever anybody said 'I'. Lacan dedicated a

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4   S. H. Fuchs (Foulkes), "On Introjection", Int. J. of Psycho-Analysis, No. 18, 1937.

considerable part of his theory explicating four possible relationships of the human subject and discourse.[5] All of them, except one —the Analytic Discourse, imply and maintain the illusion that completeness and wholeness is possible.

In Socioculture, language turns into "mythos". What is the meaning of the Oedipal myth, for example? It announces that the object of desire is not lost forever but only forbidden. The myth of scientific discourse is that absolute knowledge is possible. Religious discourse asserts that we can be completely happy. Every universe of discourse implies and explicates its own laws, ideology, Weltanschauung, image of man.

The fact is, as I said earlier on, in Socioculture language loses its roots in man and enslaves him. Because now it is not his father or mother who he has to come to terms with in adjusting his behaviour, it's the written, impersonal law of society, of the sciences, of religion, of the signifier, with which he has to negotiate his questions.

Of course, these universes of language, although having become independent, have had their authors and the unconscious of these had a lot to do with the type of explanations they produced. In this respect, Foulkes reminds us that everything we perceive, describe, express necessarily mirrors our libidinal disposition and, in the last instance, our constitution, everything, and therefore also our theoretical concepts or our terminology —a fact which he advises us not to forget! This, he says, has nothing to do with its correctness, but it hampers our scientific exactitude and understanding if it passes unnoticed. Words easily carry us away with them, once they become independent.[6]

These ideas, I think, can only be taken into consideration in the type of groups which I call a "communicative-critical network of reference". They cannot be or are not taken into consideration under the mode of functioning of language in the actual Socioculture. In the latter, groups do form, but their members are uncritical of their basic assumptions. As Norbert Elias[7] remarks, the static concepts of individual and society as well as the oppositions of subject and object, of inside and outside, are traps of human thinking in general but are particularly characteristic of and have serious consequences in the human and social sciences. The notion of absolutely independent acting and "existing" individuals is an artefact produced by human thought, characteristic of a particular phase in the self-experience of man which has deep roots in occidental thought. It is true that emotionally the geocentric image of man, although scientifically outmoded still forms part of the unconscious experience and it cannot be foreseen if, emotionally, the egocentric image of man himself can be eradicated. But, says Elias, what is not impossible, is to remove the use of this experience and the corresponding image of man as a self-evident assumption in the research in human sciences. An analysis of the development of ego and superego as well as the dynamics of drive economy —expression of love, hate, aggression and hierarchy of power— resulting from our present socio-cultural functioning imposes itself as a must in the area of human sciences, although for reasons of space such an analysis cannot be included here.

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[5] Jaques Lacan, "L'Envers de la Psychanalyse", unpublished Seminar, book XVII, 1969-1970
[6] Hanne Campos, "Origins of Groupanalytic Theory in the Natural Sciences, Sociology and Psychoanalysis", 1986.
[7] Norbert Elias "Über den Prozess der Zivilisation 1", Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 158, Frankfurt a.M. 197A (1968 Introduction of the author for the re-edition of his work)

The differentiation of the various universes of discourse and our insistence to make them even more watertight, i.e. no possible continuous and regular dialogue between different disciplines, makes it easy for us to forget that all we perceive, feel and say carries the traces of sphincter morality and of the dehumanized law of the signifier, the written law of science and of bureaucracy which ignores, denies and represses the existence of the unconscious subject endowed with love and hate, with life and death, and who from the moment he speaks converts his fellow human beings, on one hand, into the Gods of his love, i.e. the ones who assure his own lovability, and, on the other, into the objects of his aggression, i.e. all the things he rejects and despises and never would be himself. The process of identification, the entrance into the symbolic universe through an act of introjection brings with it the illusion of an independent, autonomous individual. The ideal, the idios, the eidos, gets confused with the actual human being, who through the very fact of language is in constant interdependence with his fellow men. Socioculture, curiously enough, is individual-centred!

Theory, I think, is a characteristic language organisation of Socioculture. It maintains the myth of wholeness and totality of the individual. The sciences keep up the illusion of a unique author and individuals identify with him. If groups are formed, it is an incidental side effect. Indeed, in this sense, it is an effect of language as it is used in the sociocultural environment. And, indeed, the resulting psychology is a mass-psychology as Freud himself said and has nothing to do with the English translation of "group" psychology. Mass-psychology is the ideology of the author, of the leader. The signifier, the leading ideas, the symptom of the author "massifies" men in their identification to the greater glory of the Ego of all. This has a price: The necessary aggression against fellow men who do not think alike. So it appears as if it was one idea against the other, when really it is one man against the other, everyone with an army of "infans" of *unmündige* behind them. The translation of "minor" in English does not express the meaning of infants in German which is "not talking, of not having even a mouth".

In Socioculture we produce an unchanging context because the commands of our superego make us confuse that of what should be —a command related to the past— with that of what will be. We are caught in a cause-effect type of reasoning, determinism. <u>It is a world of progress and development, not a world of process and creativity</u>. We think in terms of past and not in terms of future. The latter is no doubt more laborious and difficult. It means to cut loose from our symbolic fathers, the origin of our superego and be responsible for our own word. We have to learn to talk not with one, God or whoever, but with many, our fellow men, with people, with folks —one of the derivatives of Foulkes.

To get out of this organisation of language typical of Socioculture, I think, we need two things:

1. a new social context, and

2. a new type of concepts which do not feed the myth of wholeness.

<u>As far as a different social context is concerned</u>, in a recent paper about the origins of Group Analysis in the natural sciences, sociology and psychoanalysis[8], I suggest that during the first

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[8] Hanne Campos, "Origins of Groupanalytic Theory in the Natural Sciences, Sociology and Psychoanalysis", 1986.

decades of this century a change takes place in the character of group relations. There appears the group, as I called it before, as a "communicative-critical network of reference".

It's a new context to be discussed and described not by an individual author but by a group of people interested in critically exploring communal life and of creating a new social as well as symbolic context. The Koinonic-Ethico Culture described by Pat de Mare is such a new context: it is a ethico-cultural springboard from which to view all three cultures: Look critically at our common heritage, our Bioculture and our Socioculture and see if we can separate from our symbolic fathers without identifying with the aggressor and killing our brothers!

Concerning a new type of concept which does not feed the myth of wholeness, it should not be just a concept, because the latter invariably is absorbed into a conventional theoretical context. French is the only language which maintains both the Greek and the Latin origins of the word "scheme". The Greek skhêma, schème in French, in philosophy means intermediary representation between concept and perception. According to Kant, for example, a number is a skhêma. I think we could easily think of matrix and network as such a skhêma. A symbolic element not readily absorbed into an existing theoretical context and which neither presents a model with which to reproduce something similar or identical. Something which makes us think and imagine without falling into the trap of construing a cosmology, a final answer; something which stimulates us to create a Matrix Representation Grid as Göran Ahlin[9] has done recently but which does not force us to adapt any given group to a preconceived concept or model. Also, Pat de Mare's idea of three cultures, moving from a binary opposition to a tripod, would also be such a "schema" which permits us to create new social spaces where we can critically think about man and his symbolic universe. Groupanalytic concepts in general represent what has aptly been called a movable context. I hope to have said something which could clarify the question of theory. In sum, there is no group theory which gives account of a so-called social nature of man. Individual and society are abstractions which, like all significant elements of language, have an effect of existence, but should be critically analyzed if they are to be used to determine communal life. Theory carries the traces of our libidinal investment and has to do with the particular solution to the authors narcissistic hurt and of the ones who follow the theory. This is another point which should be thought about since what may be a sublimation on the part of the author, may result in an acting-out on part of the adherents. Theories, ideologies, ways of thinking group people together. This gives the impression that their "natural" way of living is in groups, overlooking the fact that their symptoms —and theoretical elaboration has to do with symptoms— is basically group destructive. The basic law of group dynamics —"that together they constitute the norm from which individually they deviate"[10]— and Foulkes' hope that in the group-analytic group aggressive drives could be used to wear down each other's symptoms, could be some of our guiding thoughts in approaching group and communal life critically and creatively.

The last thought I propose is that symbolic elaboration should follow group discussion and should basically be a group effort. For such an approach we need "skhêmas" which do not

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9   Göran Ahlin, M.D. "Preaching for the Group Matrix", still unpublished, presented at the June Scientific Meeting of the Group-Analytic Society (London), 1986.

10   S. H. Foulkes, "Introduction to Group-Analytic Psychotherapy", W. Heinemann Med. Books Ltd., London', 1948.

lead ipso facto to an identification with the possibility of a new cosmovision, but permit us to work analytically and creatively with our present symptom, which is: COMMUNAL LIFE DOES NOT WORK AND WE CANNOT EXPRESS OURSELVES VERY CLEARLY ABOUT IT.

I do not have to remind you that a symptom is that which does not work; it is the focal point of the disturbance in a network, that which cannot be put into words, that which is intrinsically autistic, not communicable.

In the Koinonic-Ethico Culture of the group, the individual gets to know the biocultural and sociocultural determinants of his identity. Trying to progressively communicate the in-communicable, he contributes to weave the dynamic matrix of his group. He is present; he is represented in this matrix through his communications. He experiences the effects his communications have on others and the communication of others have on him. Finally he learns to separate and form part of other groups in a way different to the group of his Bioculture and different to what he experiences in the groups his Socioculture offers him. Such a group is really a transitional object: it's not the analyst's, although he creates and maintains it, it's not of any particular member, it is not a family nor like any other life group, it is partly real partly imaginary and partly symbolic; it is made of language but related to concrete people in face to face contact. It's something which helps us think in a different way about man. It's a new context. It's a new relation to language.

The question of the function and locus of the groupanalyst intimately related to the issues raised here has to be left for another occasion due to limitations of space.

To close I shall say something about what I consider to be some of the difficulties in establishing a general theory of group functioning.

All the disciplines imply a Weltanschauung, an image of man, but it's not probable that people revolt against, let's say, Medicine, adducing that they do not agree with the image of man it proposes. Their own need of an explanation of their existence makes them fall in with medical ideology. So, Medicine goes on investigating, taking our body to pieces, selling it, etc. etc. and in the process losing the human being.

The problem in group theory lies in the object of investigation: humanity. H(h)umanity in its double meaning: the essence, the being of man in the abstract as it applies to all and every man in the concrete. This is the predicament of all "impossible" professions. We, group workers, are asked the question nobody has been asked after philosophers, prophets and church fathers: Who is man? All that we can answer today is not very original: Man is somebody who talks to his fellow men. And what happens when they talk to each other? They suffer from the "effect of truth" and the "effect of existence" which language produces, i.e.

1. Man's existence is what can be said about this existence. There is an impasse encountered by logicians and mathematicians. To conceive of something as "one", it needs to be seen as a part of a bigger whole. So the question which is still to be answered is: What is the bigger whole of which human language is a part of? Theoreticians solved the problem by introducing a meta-language or meta-theory, mathematicians the -1 or +1, logicians the concept of logical paradox. The function of zero in mathematics is only a few hundred years old. All these elaborations belong to Socioculture as we described it today. They all claim to be in possession of the truth. This brings us to the second problem in explicating a general theory of group functioning.

2. The truth, as it appears in the discourses of Socioculture, determines the "existence" of man. Pat de Mare quotes his daughter saying that "we live in a world of technical brilliance and cultural barbarity". I suppose that this is another way of putting what a surgeon once said: "The operation was a success, but the patient died". That is about where we are. What happens is that man's life relates to more than one type of truth. There is no theoretical "reason" which could justify the exclusion, expulsion, rejection or killing of our fellow-man. The reason is to be found in the one introduced by language itself in the relation of man with his neighbour who represents that "Other", who promises us an existence at the same time as he/she reminds us of our death. The ultimate truth is that our life, our existence depends on our inclusion in a universe of discourse sustained by our fellow human beings and this has to be negotiated over and over again, so that we may avoid falling into the trap of our symbolic network which leads us to imagine our adversary, confusing the relationship with our fellow human beings with the one we entertain with this "Other" who defines our existence. Regular and continuous face to face meetings are a pre-condition for group work and the elaboration of a common symbolic reference. Something which is not so, for example, in psychoanalysis.

What, then, does it mean to be in a group culture? For me it means that a relatively stable group of people meets on a regular and continuous basis to discuss critically their common problems and to explicit the ethical guidelines of their particular group.

What does the group analyst mean? I repeat what Pat de Mare wrote in his skhêma: "Learn to talk to each other"; across nations, across disciplines, to find our group culture, a bouillon of language which cures us of the hate and death implied in human communication. But, perhaps, this is asking too much.