The Boundaries
of
Group Dynamics

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A critical analysis of the contribution of W.G. Lawrence to the book 'Exploring Individual and Organizational Boundaries'. The paper was delivered to the consultancy training group of the Tavistock Leicester Conference in March 1979. It focuses on the boundaries and assumptions of the conceptual model used by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in its Group Relations Training Programme.

The Boundaries of Group Dynamics

[Response to 'Exploring Individual and Organisational Boundaries', Edited by W. Gordon Lawrence]

At the start of the section on Group Dynamics in W.R. Bion's book 'Experiences in Groups', the author endorses Melanie Klein's view that at the beginning of life an individual's first perception of relatedness is with the breast. It would appear that the three basic assumption groups identified by Bion, mirror from an individual level the oral, anal and genital phases of self awareness, seen as fundamental experiences within Freudian systems. Basic assumption groups represent collective regression into one of these three infantile modes of being, while the work group represents that reality oriented, developmental ego- function, seeking to relate to the external environment and to the self with increasing accuracy, and to manage the boundary between the perceived interior self and external environment with authenticity.

As with Newtonian mechanics such hypotheses, or laws of human nature, were adequate explanations within certain fields of observed phenomena. They are, however, proving inadequate to provide the basis for a unified field theory of human behaviour. There are elements of social behaviour, unconscious dynamics in play, into which Bion hypotheses fail to give insight. It is consequently these areas of unconscious dynamic which dominate those institutions which operate in dependency upon the Bion model. Inevitably, insight into the lacuna within Bion's thought is most deeply blocked within those institutions whose existence, methodology, socio-political structure, task performance, social role and environmental expectations are determined by Bion's hypotheses. In this country, the Tavistock Institute stands pre-eminently in this position, but following from it we find the Grubb Institute, and the Chelmsford Cathedral Centre for Research and Training. The position is also reflected in many individuals and parts of institutions which have derived energy, expertise, insight and methodological framework from the Tavistock Institute. It is, of course, significant that the Tavistock Model is defended from conceptual examination within the training conferences, by which it is exported, since any such examination might call in question the assumptions on which the conferences themselves are modelled, so exposing both members, consultants and management to presumed intolerable levels of anxiety and stress.

THE LACUNA NAMED

The fundamental omission which weakens the Bion construct is the splitting off of the suckling infant from its previous foetal existence. In contra-distinction to Bion, I would postulate that at the beginning of its existence the human being emerges into self-consciousness in relation to the inside of the womb - a warm, dark, watery, supportive, living cosmos in which the foetus is carried in total dependency. This archetypal passivity forms the fundamental trace of being in the foetal unconscious.
Birth provides a disruptive discontinuity between foetal womb life and infantile development in relation to the mother's breast. Modern psycho-analysis points repeatedly to the traumatic

tunnel effect of engagement, crushing, exclusion, and emergence through the birth channel as the fundamental nexus of loss, splitting, paranoia, disintegration and alienation of the human condition. I suggest it was the depth of repression of this fundamental position which underlay Bion's blind-spot, as that of Klein and Freud. The subsequent analysis of basic assumption activity represents a social construct which is a defence against anxiety, colluding with social avoidance of engagement with the archetypal experience of loss.

In groups, institutions and societies in which the threats to survival are slender, the Bion construct of basic assumption groups and work group is an adequate model for the interpretation of behaviour. However, as stress levels increase, and in particular as threats to the survival of the person, the group, or the society grow in intensity to the point at which the unit intuits (or fears or projects) that destruction is possible, and possibly imminent, then the more fundamental and archetypal dynamics come to the fore. Unconscious behaviour is increasingly regressed to the foetal position as it experiences constriction, eviction, and alienation in the process of birth. The paranoid-schizoid defences against anxiety associated with this position have been admirably pinned by Isobel Menzies in her paper: 'Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety'. It is significant that her work was based on analysis of the organisational dynamics in a hospital, which, of course, faces anxieties about death. It is also significant that Isobel Menzies takes the work of Melanie Klein as a starting point, and her writing is therefore descriptive of system symptoms, rather than analytic of underlying process. I take it that Melanie Klein also experienced blockage in the psycho-analysis of birth trauma within her own being, so preventing identification of the subconscious dynamics in play at this level of regression.

Access to the underlying dynamics has been achieved within the work of the Urban Church Project through a series of analytic consultancy- research engagements with groups and institutions whose dependency base has imploded under hyper-stress, leaving a residual rump organisation existing in the here and now as if in limbo, split off from the dynamic sources of institutional life, growth and development, fixated in a position of avoidance of the original experience of hyper-stress. In this position, leadership and membership are selected from those whose intra-personal dynamics match the primitive paranoid-schizoid defensive systems of the institution.

WORK GROUP REGRESSION UNDER HYPERSTRESS

The higher the anxiety levels experienced in a group the harder it is to sustain commitment to the work group, and the more likely it is that basic assumption activity overwhelms work group activity. As stress levels increase, however, another dynamic begins to assert itself, which is more primitive than the engagement of basic assumption activity. I refer, of course, to regression into the more primitive defences against anxiety, associated with the paranoid-schizoid position, which spring initially in the human condition from the archetypal trauma of birth.

The unconscious material which dominates in this phase is derived from the experience of rising terror and impending death which is associated with crushing in the birth channel. The paranoid position is not associated here with disruptive feeding routine, but with the fundamental terror that the good dependency cosmos of the womb-world has reversed into some alien attacking beast; the waters of life support are draining away; contact with the

source of well being is being severed; freedom of movement is inhibited; body comfort is replaced by body pain; the sense of being held is replaced by the motion of being evicted, and the foetus experiences terror of falling into an abyss of the unknown. It is, I suggest, the confusion between dependency within the Bion construct, and regression into the paranoid-schizoid position, which underlies so me of the confusion about the task of the church evidenced within Bruce Reed's 'The Dynamics of Religion'. Here again, examination of the assumptions upon which that analysis is based is resisted by the Grubb Institute, and any engagement which might threaten the underlying construct in use is terminated abruptly. I would suspect, therefore, that the Grubb Institute shares with the Tavistock Institute in the position of suppression of examination of the paranoid-schizoid position, a stance which indicates massive collusion with the regression process which is coming to play an increasingly dominant part in social dynamics. Other institutions like the Chelmsford Cathedral Centre for Research and Training share this position.

From the perspective of the foetus engaging in birth channel the future is hell, unknowable and threatening. That which to the mother is perceived as the process of birth, is perceived by the foetus as the onset of death. That which is described by Bion and Klein as the beginning of life, is experienced by the foetus as the end of life.

> In my beginning is my end,
> Hurled from womb to certain doom.

It is assumed that reality is overwhelming and destructive and there is no hope of engaging it and staying alive. The defences against this position of anxiety are dominated by extreme paranoia and heavy splitting. The response is one of passive paralysis in the face of on-coming disaster and the projection onto the environment of the omnipotent, destructive, evil forces which threaten the very source of being itself.

Such a position of regression overwhelms the work group, the blocking of which is experienced at a totally different order from those constraints arising out of basic assumption activity (whose origins lie in the post-birth experience of dependency, conflict and relatedness in the early weeks and months of infancy). Within the foetally regressed position of the paranoid-schizoid defence, the underlying assumption is that there can be no work which can possibly generate a viable future. Destruction is inevitable, work is inappropriate, waiting is necessary, anaesthetics are required. In acute cases of regression, where the projection is mirrored from the cosmos onto the foetus itself, overwhelming guilt, alienation, badness, anger and terror are experienced, and in this position of counter-regression the self is experienced as bad, an incorporation by mirroring of the reversed perception of womb. At this point suicide is appropriate, madness an authentic expression and self-annihilation by the group a social incarnation (see for example the dynamics of Jim Jones' messianic sect in the jungle of Guyana, Nietzsche's insanity, Jean Paul Sartre's "No Exit", or the suicide of Sylvia Plath).

THE WORK GROUP SUSTAINED

It is only in so far as this fundamental regression can be managed and reversed, that the work group can re-engage. Here the existentialists are inherently accurate in their assertion that it is only he w ho has faced death who can enter life. T.S. Elliot's poetic phrase :

captures a similar perspective. So Lawrence's concluding comment affirms that social hope can only be generated when people have 'made themselves sufficiently aware of the fact and process of death to make life worth the questioning.' I take it that in situations of hyper-stress, the work group has to cope with life after death. It can only do so if it can gain access to the source of the myth that birth is death for the foetus, and so regain the holistic continuity of life from conception, via womb-life, through the trauma of birth channel, into the external world and the realities of relatedness, differentiation and self-awareness which constitute the world within which Bion was bounded.

Once that holistic life-trace can be handled in analysis without regression to primitive defences against anxiety, the work group can be sustained even in those situations which threaten its survival. The generation of realistic social hope demands the demythologising of foetal experience and the denial that birth represents death. Once that position is reached, social innovation becomes possible, since the convulsions associated with social change (abreacted loss) are perceived as heralding the new thing, rather than presaging the end. Clearly massive confusion exists in current analytic attempts to deal with hope, which have designated its function as exclusively within that of the pairing group, associated with genital activity in the world of afterbirth. Where hope is relegated to the pairing basic assumption it must always remain unfulfilled. Once the reality of hope can be associated with the foetal experience of birth, then the forward movement and commitment of the work group to a process of intense innovation and evolution in the face of hyper-stress can be generated.

I would submit therefore, that work group leadership requires the ability to survive life-destructive hyper-stress, without regression into paranoid-schizoid defences against anxiety associated with the imminent, presumed destruction of birth. Once this dynamic is perceived, it can be applied to work group leadership within the world of basic assumption groups to give increasingly clear definition of work group dynamic in the Bion construct. I would suggest that this analysis offers a holistic concept of the work group, which enables conceptualisation of its process in those situations of hyper-stress within which Bion's hypotheses break down.

If this analysis is correct, then we would expect to find within the Tavistock Institute fixated defences of the paranoid-schizoid position, matched by a passive paralysis and a fixated dependency upon the Bion construct, with dynamic avoidance of examination of underlying assumptions, in particular those associated with the implementation of social innovation within the Tavistock Institute itself. Tavistock consultants could be expected to perceive areas of confusion and disorientation in the environment, while remaining blind to the same factors within the Tavistock Institute. They would however be blocked in the development of any adequate analytic construct within which these experiences could be interpreted, since the development of such a construct would threaten the very defences around which the base institution is assembled. The rest of this paper represents an attempt to examine Gordon Lawrence's contribution, as editor of the book 'Exploring Individual and Organisational Boundaries', to see whether this hypothesis holds water.

EXPLORING INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL BOUNDARIES :

PREFACE (pp. xiii - xvii)

The volume is dedicated to the memory of Pierre Turquet killed in a car accident in France on 27th December 1975 at the age of 62...... The relationship between Gordon Lawrence and Pierre Turquet

> 'was not always a calm one and could, at times, be very angry...... To work with Pierre Turrquet was essentially to move into an educational adventure. It is the idea of adventure that needs to be held on to in retrospect. There might be discomfort, even pain, often amusement, but always learning.

> 'When surrounded by a set of sympathetic colleagues on the staff of a group relations conference, Pierre Turquef would lead them into new problem areas.. When colleagues were less sympathetic to the primary task he would somewhat more contumaciously attack what he thought were the problems. By doing this he stretched the capability of his colleagues to experience and interpret group and institutional phenomena and so, quite directly, enhanced their ability to take risks in leading themselves, in the roles of consultants, into the conscious and unconscious issues of group and institutional life...... Quite explicitly at times Pierre would lead the staff outside the immediate 'skin' of the conference to consider particular institutions in which the staff had experience.'

Now if we examine some of the verbs used in the sentences above you find that Pierre is very angry, moves into an adventure through discomfort and pain, leads into new problem areas, attacks the constraints that hold him back, stretches capabilities of colleagues, perceived as constraining walls, leads the staff outside the 'skin' of the conference. I would submit that these descriptors are consistent with Pierre's position of pushing through the birth matrix, out of the foetal regressed position and into a holistic world view. I suspect that in his intrapersonal and analytic world Pierre had dealt with this material, but was unable to surface it in systematic analysis because of the unconscious repression exercised within his environment. The explosive broadening of canvass which Pierre experienced begins now to link up with the material from the Brunel Institute of Organisation and Social Studies concerning levels of management and the psycho-dynamics by which persons move upward in level of integration of data base. Pierre was able to manage his work group function without regression into paranoid-schizoid defences under higher levels of stress than his colleagues and was therefore able to integrate wider data bases, handle broader time spans, and operate as a conceptual synthesiser under conditions where others were left confused.

He was concerned

> 'To relate what might be happening within the boundary of a conference across that boundary into what might be happening in the environment of institutions and societies.'

This ability to transact boundaries between the inner and outer worlds of an institution indicated his fundamental ability to transact the boundary between the inner and outer worlds of his self, which was not perceived to be discontinuous but integrated and related.

> 'Those of his colleagues who could not engage on all these dimensions sometimes were left feeling angry and unwanted. But, for others he pointed to new realms. He awakened in some the wish to come to grips with their cultural heritage and relate it to contemporary society.'

Again we here link the capacity to handle multi-dimensional space of independent variables with the levels of management work of BIOSS and associate that with the capacity to control the tendency to regress when faced with threatening constraint. Colleagues whose capacity for multi-dimensional thought was blocked by schizoid splitting experienced the mismatch as raising anxiety and anger, rejection and crushing in relationship to Pierre. In other words it reactivated and reverberated with material from their own schizoid nucleus. Others were awakened and given the wish to come to grips with their cultural heritage and relate it to contemporary society. This sense of emerging into new consciousness out of sleep, or emerging into new life out of death, is a pattern which links into one holistic continuum the past cultural heritage and the present experienced reality. It indicates the hope that beyond the schizoid split is a world of continuity in which regression is unnecessary, in which the past history and culture can be embraced as the matrix of the present without reactivated trauma. It is, I think significant that many people who work with the analytic insights of the behavioural sciences have to work in the here and now and avoid historic implications of the analysis, so splitting off from womb life and its associated traumatic ending. On the other hand, those who are out of touch with their behaviour in the here and now are often obsessively interested in the history of society and operate at a purely cerebral level. Neither the analyst nor the historian appears able to bridge the split and bring the behavioural and the temporal into a unity. We can only press back to the archetypal roots of society and civilisation through its birth into today's world if we can handle the non-regressive continuity between the here and now of the afterbirth and the there and then of the foetal cosmos.

> 'It became clear that Turquet was viewing the world as a massive group and as such subject to irrational and unconscious social and psychological forces but, nevertheless, able, albeit unconsciously, to give authority to particular nations. To report his thought thus is, however, to oversimplify because clearly he was holding in his mind some conception of the world and its large-scale social phenomena that was beyond the ken of others.'

As the work at BIOSS has proceeded it has become clear that not only are there five fundamental levels of management, but beyond the most complex of these there is another set of levels representing order 6,7,8,9 and 10. In this world large industrial complexes are treated as units, much in the way that individuals are treated as units in the standard five levels of management. As level succeeds to level so units are aggregated and federated until somewhere around 9 or 10 the person is able to handle the dynamics of the global construct as a single entity with a time span that covers world history. It would appear that Pierre Turquet was occasionally able to operate at this level of complexity handling, although his environment and the lack of any conceptual framework prevented him from giving his experience an enduring written form. I would submit that it is only as psycho-analysis can handle the task of personal integration from conception till the here and now, that these levels of experiential integration will be adequately released within society to cope with the complex task of global management, which we are already beginning to face.

Turquet had

' a capacity to work across institutional boundaries and he remains one of a very small band of people in the Tavistock Centre who have wanted and been able to do so...... Publication was an activity in which Turquet placed little value. His thrust was always towards experiencing, discovering and articulating; his thoughts.'

Here again, you see Pierre's inherent confidence that beyond the constraints of the here and now was a world which made sense and could be grasped, that the experience of loss led to the experience of resurrection, that work involved pain but should be pushed through for its consummation, that boundaries are to be broken out of and managed, rather than accepted as horizons not to be transgressed. Pierre was able to manage his own boundary transaction without regression or splitting. There was continuous conscious contact between the here and now and the there and then at each point of his world, a condition which I suggest is only possible to the person for whom the continuity between the here and now of the afterbirth and the there and then of foetal experience can be traversed without regression. Pierre is experienced as thrusting into the unknown, pushing his way through the constraining matrix, always seeking to experience, to discover, to articulate. Yet through all this he is experienced as a tragic figure, one who in breaking through the boundaries of the Tavistock Institute and its conceptual model was bound to destroy himself since the anxiety defences of the very institution on which he depended were associated with repression of the very material which he was seeking to articulate. This tragic facet is articulated by Gordon Lawrence in the words,

> 'In the last two months or so of his life he was full of sadness at the human condition. He felt passionately that the Tavistock Clinic, with which he had been associated for just under half his life, had failed to move psycho-analysis from its essentially dyadic preoccupations to become a cultural tool, which he, along with others, had tried to do within the frame of group relations training. And he, at times, would despair at the inability of men and women in contemporary society to question the authority structures and organisations of their institutions; to get behind the easily understood and taken-for-granted assumptions of group and institutional living.'

It would appear that in his closing days Pierre Turquet had come to perceive at an intuitive level the extraordinarily oppressive constraints which operated in his environment and which blocked the emergence of the new conceptual framework towards which he was feeling, preventing effectively its dynamic embedding in society. At and after the time of his death I was forced to the interpretation that Pierre Turquet's last act was his most potent consultative word, an interpretative happening in partnership with Jean Wagstaff, his co-consultant, which acted out the despair, the constraint, the regression which he experienced in his abortive attempt to break out of the controlling matrix of the Tavistock Model. It is hardly surprising that Gordon Lawrence saw his task as editor of this volume as

> 'part of the process of mourning for Pierre Turquet.'

It could also appropriately be termed an act of institutional expiation, since grief is so often linked with guilt.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: EXPLORING BOUNDARIES (pp. 1 - 19)

'W.R. Bion's "Experiences in Groups" (1961) stands pre-eminent because it elaborates the working hypotheses and methodology on which the Tavistock Model is founded. To radically alter this method would be to establish a different model.'

The ten commandments have apparently been given and must not be questioned, only commentary and elucidation are permitted.

'A.K. Rice published "Learning for Leadership" in which he meticulously described the working conferences in interpersonal and intergroup relations that had developed from Bion's ideas. Having set out the basic concepts and described the structure, culture and activities of the conferences by using an open systems analysis, Rice pulled together much of the key thinking about working conferences. There have been no major radical shifts since then.'

So it is that Bion's fundamental hypotheses are treated as foundation, the conference events are designed to incarnate those hypotheses and examine them but not to challenge them, the conference institution is then described, analysed and interpreted and the Tavistock Model has fixed. The 'Group Relations Reader' edited by Arthur D. Colman and W. Harold Bexton is commended in that it

' makes available the best of the published material up to this date of the theory, method and application of the Tavistock Model of group relations training.'

Lawrence goes on to make the point that in respect of the volume which he himself has edited, since others had done this basic work of

'explicating the conceptual, methodological and central values of the model as exemplified through working conferences, writers for this volume have been freed to be associative...... '

One gains the impression that the foundation is not open for examination. What is to be described and analysed is the kind of building that has been erected. If this particular edifice fails to meet certain tests it is to be patched up, but the foundations may not be examined for fundamental faults since obviously such an exercise would threaten the whole superstructure upon which the Tavistock consultants depend, and hence with whose protection they collude.

There then follows a restatement of Bion's fundamental position fleshed out in the hypotheses about the work group, the basic assumption groups of dependency, fight/flight and pairing, followed by hypotheses about the application and outworking of this material in interpersonal, group, inter-group and institutional relationships, summarised on page 9.

'This thinking around the small group has had the qualities of an architectonic paradigm for considering other group activities.'

Bion offered his hypotheses as working constructs which w ere open for examination, testing and refinement. The Tavistock Institute would appear to have elevated them to the law of the Medes and Persians as a defence against its own anxiety and as preserver of its own institutional dependency base. I would submit that the Tavistock Institute has become

increasingly overwhelmed by the basic assumption of dependency and is, therefore, unable to engage its work group effectively within its own institution.

There are, however, windows through which little chinks of light fall into the dark world within. For instance, concerning the dynamics of the formation of myths, Lawrence notes,

> 'The purpose of the myth seems to be to unite the aim of the individual with that of the group so as to bind them together in such a way that what is understood to be destructive conflict will be prevented.'

I would hypothesise that within the Tavistock Model creative criticism, development and growth of understanding of the fundamental assumptions on which the model is based are seen to be precisely evocative of this 'destructive conflict'.

> 'In small groups of up to twelve people the typical myths are the basic assumption myths. In larger groups different myths would be present. In general, the cultural language of myths is expressions of the forces which unite the group and contribute to the feeling of oneness between the individual and the group - a systemless world with no boundaries. In such a culture there will be resistance against naming the myth because the fear is that the unity of the group, with its attendant feelings of closeness and intimacy, will be destroyed. The fear is that if the myth is elucidated it will take away the basic security of the group.'

We are left facing the question as to what are the myths of the Tavistock Institute. I would suggest that the myths in force have something to do with the elevation of Bion to the deity and the investing of his working hypotheses with the authority of universal law, to challenge which is to be impious and to suffer the wrath of the gods, let alone the collapse of the known world.

On page 10 Lawrence goes on to probe the dynamics of myth creation and the sources of mythological formulation.

> 'Myths are created due to the basic assumption wishes for altogetherness and easy life. They are kept away by accurate task definition, developing skills, reality testing, realistic notions of time boundary, realistic perception of external reality; in short by vigorous and vigilant work group leadership. When these fail, myths are generated to focus on the internal life of the group, as a flight from the outside reality which demands work and faces the individual with pain. The harder or the more frustrating the outside reality or the task, the greater is the need to turn exclusively into the internal life.'

I take it Pierre Turquet was pre-eminently a work group leader within the Tavistock Institute, although in terms of reformulation of basic analysis, even he was dependent upon Bion and colluded with the dependency inherent within the Tavistock Model. However, Pierre Turquet's experience reflects the overwhelming of work leadership, partly by basic assumption activity, but pre-eminently by the regression into the paranoid-schizoid defence against anxiety against which the work group leadership within the Bion construct has no defence. With the failure of his work leadership the myths in force within the Tavistock were intensified. Again I postulate that workgroup leadership can only be sustained in a position

where the workgroup leader is either not dependent on the group in which he is exercising the work leadership function, or else he/she has got to that point of coping with death, at which, whatever threats might be experienced, either in terms of personal destruction or group or institutional insecurity, the anxieties raised can be managed without regression into the paranoid-schizoid position.

Probing further, Lawrence continues,

> 'I think, also, that group life, irrespective of the size of the grouping, is organised around defences against the anxieties of uncertainty and chaos which, in turn, produces myths. When an individual member joins a group for the first time it triggers off in his memory models of his own past behaviour patterns and experiences in similar situations. There is a search for familiar models and familiar situations. There is, therefore, always a possibility that the here and now experience will be determined by past experience. The past represents something familiar, tangible, controllable and secure. It provides a good opportunity to escape from the uncertainties of the moment. In basic assumption groups this happens especially.'

Here we possibly see a clue to the emergence of the paranoid-schizoid primitive defences against anxiety which are experienced particularly in an institution in which the more superficial anxiety defences have broken down under constant articulation and examination. So in any institution in which analytic skills are constantly exercised there will be a constant search for fundamental defences against anxiety within that area of the unconscious still unreached by analysis. Any attempts by work leadership within that institution to probe this further layer of regression will be met with intense resistance, fear, anger, irrational aggression and subtle shifts of loyalties, rewards, personnel, splits in relationships, etc. It may well have been this experience which underlay Pierre Turquet's sadness at the end of his life.

THE LARGE GROUP EXPERIENCE

> 'Pierre Turquet developed what thinking there has been around this complex event. His two papers, "Leadership: The individual and the group" (1974) and "Threats to identify in the large group" (1975) stand alone as the only sustained efforts to explore and explicate the phenomena of large groups...... I am becoming increasingly preoccupied with large group phenomena because it is possible to hear, with the 'third ear', what is taking place in the wider society. The large group is a frame for catching what is unconsciously taking place in the society at large even though that is not the stated preoccupation nor is life in society the topic of discussion. It is here that we see the narcissism of individuals struggling with the phenomenon which is experienced as being akin to 'society'. It is here, for example, that we experience the two related myths that society is unknowable and that only the individual is knowable...... The large group is usually the total membership working with three or four consultants. It is at times, 'hell' realised, be it of total order or buzzing chaos or nothingness.'

Now I take it Pierre Turquet was pre-eminently able to conceptualise the data base of the large group which requires very high levels of analysis and abstraction. In a group of 65

people there are, for instance, well over 2,000 pair relationships occurring simultaneously, let alone the complex inter-group relationships between sub-groups of other sizes. Only the brain which is able to sustain operation at extremely high management level can so conceptualise the content of the large group experience that its relationship to societal dynamics can be picked up and analysed. Again, only a person who is able to transact boundaries between internal and external reality under high stress is able to sustain reality-oriented perception of society as a whole, while also experiencing the here and now of the large group event, and within that complex process be able to raise hypotheses about the inter-relationship of the interior and exterior worlds of the large group. To someone operating at this level of management the experience that mass society is unknowable is indeed seen as a myth, can be named as such and appropriate interpretations as to the dynamics underlying the myth can be made. To others, the large group is precisely 'hell' realised. Just as for Jean Paul Sartre, 'hell is other people', so for the large group consultant operating below the required level of management, hell is other people en masse. It is perhaps worth noting that at Pierre Turquet's last Tavistock Leicester Conference he introduced the innovation of five consultants to form the projection receiving team as a consultancy probe in the large group. The innovation apparently put him under high levels of stress in handling the projected unconscious material from the matrix, particularly as he was working with a conceptual framework which failed to provide him with a basis for understanding the dynamics of regression that were in play. As evidence builds up that the global construct is itself moving into a period of intense regression into paranoid-schizoid behaviour, presaging the onset of the constraints and breakdown of the dependency base of mother earth, so this regressive matrix will be projected into every large group event in rapidly rising intensity. Consultants unable to handle the high levels of information input and the highly repressive regression dynamics will be increasingly at risk. Individual analysis that takes the consultant back through the birth matrix into womb life and out again until the egression can be negotiated without regression would seem to be an essential element of preparation for this increasingly stressed role. I would also hypothesise that experience of a large group event in which the dependency frame is over-stressed and begins to break down so exposing the regression to paranoid-schizoid behaviour may also provide an experiential frame within which such learning could take place. Such an event, would, however, provide much higher levels of stress for members and consultants than the comparatively protected and well bounded large group event of the Tavistock Model.

On page 14 Gordon Lawrence continues,

> 'The more I think about working conferences which use the Tavistock Model the more I am convinced that they will lose their value if the focus shifts from authority and political relatedness. There is a continual pressure on staffs in their consultant roles to explore only interpersonal relationships. The concern has to continue to be the exploration and explication of the real and fantasised relatedness of the individual in his roles to his groups, institutions and society: that is, his political responsibility and authority.

> 'Because this is an uncomfortable concern I suspect that a number of socially structured arrangements are established by people providing group relations training to defend themselves against the anxieties that such a concern arouses. These defences can resonate with the feelings held by the participants who sometimes see themselves as consumers of experiences which must be 'good' and free of any psychic

pain or anxiety. So all collude to avoid the challenges of the joint educational venture they could make.'

To be sure the Tavistock Institute is aware of the seduction to move away from the consideration of the projection and introjection in the interpersonal, group, inter-group, institutional and societal levels of dynamic, and to collude with conference members' desire to deflect all work into therapy on an individual and interpersonal basis. I would however suggest that the self-same process of seduction operates at a much higher level as a force upon the Tavistock Institute itself to restrict its investigation of unconscious process to those areas which are perceived to be tolerable to society at large. Thus the pairing, fight/flight and dependency dynamics are open to investigation, but the examination of societal regression into the more primitive defences against anxiety would raise intolerable stress levels for the work group which the Tavistock Institute represents. Since it has not been able to analyse the dynamics of regression, it is undefended against the process of regression, and colludes with the dominant societal unconscious dynamic in force, both in its conceptual construct, and in its experiential engagement with social process. Again, I would make the hypothesis that the Tavistock Institute itself is one of those 'socially structured arrangements established by people providing group relations training in order to defend themselves against the anxieties that such a concern arouses.' The breakthrough of insight into this collusional system can be expected to raise acute disturbance at every level of the Institute from the intrapersonal world of its consultants through the interpersonal, small group, departmental, interdepartmental, and environmental boundary conditions. Extremely potent forces for re-repression of the material will be experienced at every level and the Institute will only be able to negotiate such a passage if it is prepared to let go of its own life in order to engage the new level of work group and explore a new future. In so far as the Institute is unable to face death just so far will the societal regressive dynamic have power over it. Any consultant within the Institute raising such an agenda will be subject to extremely powerful institution survival dynamics in the management of his personal boundary. He will also experience the suppression into his unconscious of the emergent perceptions of reality and, ultimately, may have to face attempts at his destruction or eviction as a cancerous element, an offending antibody.

Lawrence continues,

> 'Because industrial societies engender social passivity in their citizens by creating and fulfilling the wish for dependency on the State there are dangers that group relations training can resonate with the wish for basic assumption dependency. There can be a collusion on the part of consultants to bring about this dependency........ We can expect a mirroring of aspects of society in group situations, but if they are merely reinforced they cannot be interpreted. So such a group situation becomes a socialization exercise and does not allow for any internalization of a methodology for questioning the status quo of the group setting that, in turn, could provide a model for how the participants could start to question the status quo of their outside institutions.'

I take it that Gordon Lawrence is exercising a high level of displacement and transference in this section which clearly refers to the Tavistock Model and the Institute which has grown around it. The analysis of industrial society is inadequate since the dependency functions assumed to be operating are interpreted in terms of Bion's dependency basic assumption group, whereas in reality the dependency is of a different order. It is that of the regression into foetal dependency on womb life rather than infantile dependency on breast. This

regressive dependency occurs in the face of the explosion of interpersonal data in the unknowable society, to limits beyond the capacity of the human cortex when operating in the standard frame of management level

As the data base builds up from immediate family to extended family, to wider social group, to mass society (itself only possible because of dependency on the application of technology to the means of production), so the external environment is perceived to be increasingly threatening, disorientating and beyond the capacity to know. If the world is unknowable then, in mirror image, the self is also unknown. Fragmentation in the external environment is mirrored into the experience of fragmentation, alienation and despair of wholeness in the interior world. It is precisely this point which triggers the regression to the primitive paranoid-schizoid defences against anxiety which play such a dominant role within industrial society.

The pressure to collude with this process of regression is extraordinarily intense upon the boundaries of any institution or person who engages analytic skill in an attempt to probe its process. Thus where Lawrence points to the dangers that group relations training can resonate and collude with societal defences against anxiety, I would postulate that the danger has in fact proved overwhelming, that collusion is in force, and that the emergence from this collusional position represents the work agenda of the Tavistock Institute as it faces its future. Failure to engage this agenda will ensure that the Tavistock Institute continues to be yet one more node in the socialisation exercise which sustains the matching of members of society with the primitive defences against anxiety at work within that society, so continuing to contain within the Tavistock and suppress out of the attention of its conscious mind that dangerous naming of the myths which undergird the industrial society of today.

CHAPTER 16 A CONCEPT FOR TODAY: THE MANAGEMENT OF ONESELF IN ROLE (pp. 235 - 248)

In the final chapter of the book, Lawrence approaches the nexus again and again and then flies away from it into compensatory activity, dealing with side issues and the management of symptoms. One gains the impression that the fundamental material is very close to the surface now, but is seen to be very threatening. It can be approached under cover but when disturbed it raises its head and the hunter flees in terror. First then we have the basic approach of the hunt on page 235.

> 'Whereas it is widely accepted that the search for scientific objectivity requires the individual to suppress subjective judgement, we would turn this proposition on its head to postulate that objectivity is essentially the clarification of one's own subjectivity.'

This is an application to the pursuit of scientific objectivity of the process of negative force-field intervention, releasing those negativities which constrain movement in the desired direction, to ignore which is to be dominated by them. Or in Popperian terms, it is the process of clarifying the points of mismatch rather than reinforcing the points of match in our whole approach to reality. Herein are the seeds of hope, since if Lawrence and his colleagues can generate sufficient work energy within this problem-solving empirical framework, they must eventually flush the beast from hiding:

Lawrence immediately names the constraints encountered in this process as increasing uncertainty and insecurity, limits in the toleration of which will impose limits to the clarification of subjectivity, and hence to the quality of objectivity in engaging with the realities of the inside, the outside and the boundary. He writes that as one

> 'examines more closely what is inside and what is outside and tries to regulate the boundary between them, the individual is confronting those very cultural forms, hitherto taken for granted, that provide the defensive structures and thus confronting his own primitive inner needs that these structures satisfy. In giving up an external definition of "reality' and substituting his own, he is therefore giving up elements of certainty and security and substituting uncertainty and insecurity.'

If there is to be much further forward movement within the Tavistock Model then the cultural forms of that model which have hitherto been taken for granted will have to be examined, with a particular view to analysing and defining those defensive structures within the model which protect both members and consultants, as well as the institute and thus the wider society, from confronting those deep primitive inner needs which these structures satisfy. Such a pilgrimage will be fraught with high levels of risk and anxiety which will be experienced in projection as paranoia, aggression and splitting as the process is pursued. Lawrence clearly understands this intellectually for he writes,

> 'Our argument is that the resultant disorder and chaos are the necessary risks and costs of undertaking change. Social change inescapably starts with self.'

So deep in his inner being the writer is aware that the responsibility and authority for initiating such a pilgrimage lies within himself, as he gradually learns to take authority for his own examination of psychic defences at every level of his world, from the intrapersonal to the global construct. Here, however, the block is met. Confusion, puzzlement, disorientation are experienced. He writes in the next sentence,

> 'Since we wrote that, I have puzzled a good deal as to how to make the content have real forms as part of living in industrialised societies.'

There is an immediate flight from facing the threatened disorder and chaos experienced within the self into examination of disorder and chaos in mass society, though here the author faces a wilderness with no adequate theories, or even fully elaborated descriptions, which capture all the facets of the situation. However, as he rebounds from his flight and the difficulties of understanding the mass of disparate data, he writes,

> 'To understand our experiences we are continually pressed to a psychic exploration of a set of intangible boundaries: certainty and uncertainty, chaos and order, the tolerable from the intolerable, destruction and creativity. Rational culture, so prized for centuries, is in the process of dissolution. So the concepts that have shaped our perceptions are found increasingly redundant because our perceptions of our experience are bursting the frames of our well tried conceptualizations that once gave full meaning to life.'

As he presses through to the boundary of the known he is again forced into the language of the schizoid split, the ultimate ambivalence between birth and death, the sense that the Tavistock Model, the Bion construct, is falling to pieces because it is inadequate to cope with the data base which is now pressing in. The excited yet dreadful sense that some construct more complex, more coherent, more unified, more all embracing is about to be born, and yet in the dread of that eruption there is a flight from the process of birth, back into affirmation that the Tavistock Model is now as it was in the beginning, and shall be so preserved into the future. So it is that the very framework which has given the Tavistock Institute its security in exploring the boundaries of tolerable psychic stress now becomes its prison and sets limits to the areas of stress which are tolerable. It is as if the contractions have started and there is a sense that this unknown 'enfant terrible' is about to burst into the world. Then in the next phrase he returns in regression,

'the overwhelming experience is of social passivity.'

This passivity is interpreted in terms of 'primitive dependency' and here you sense that Lawrence is just teetering on the brink of the conceptual breakthrough. Here is a new form of dependency of a different order from that described in Bion's terms of the dependency basic assumption group. It is a regression to that foetal dependency of the womb-world where not even breathing is required, where all needs are met by the beyond, where all shocks are absorbed, within which the being is defended from externality which could be so destructively threatening, where it is carried in safety. So as the pressure of unknowable society crushes industrial man, he regresses through the politics of socialism into the welfare state and then collapses from the adult-to-adult mutual interdependence, back through the child-to-parent suckling dependency, down into foetus-to-womb-world ontological dependency, regressing in the face of what Lawrence has called the fatal split. The sources of that fatal splitting are not, however, causally present within mass society. That is simply the context which generates the regression. Mass society presents the chaos, the oppression, the onslaught, the threat which calls forth the primitive defences against anxiety. The only experience of such overwhelming chaos and threat with which the human being has had to deal is the collapse of the womb-world and the traumatic constriction of birth, seen here as the fatal split, the chasm, the tunnel effect between the worlds. In his writing Lawrence appears to be identifying life with the womb, and death with afterbirth. That is a myth of the Tavistock Model.

Again, the impression is given that Lawrence is on the brink of breakthrough. He writes,

'Such a primitive dependency arises when groups or institutions find it difficult to face the realities of their situation or feel that no solutions to their problems are possible.

There is no way through. The environment has turned antagonistic. There is no exit. The crushing is inevitable. Death is soon to follow. The terrors, of alienation, destruction and disintegration are overwhelming. Reversal of time is the only path for psychic survival. Again we face the myth that birth is death.

It is fascinating to trace this ambivalent process of engagement and disengagement with the nexus. In the absence of an adequate construct within which the phenomena can be comprehended, the observed world splits apart. Thus,

'The social passivity I am pointing to, then, is a strangely potent force. Equally, it is related to potentially psychotic and destructive forces. A socially passive mass spawns other crowdlike, unconscious social processes. The obverse of social passivity is the exaggerated social aggressiveness such as is demonstrated by urban guerrilla groups or some striking students. To shock the passive, the aggression has to be inflated. The socially passive react in a more defended pattern against the destruction of the aggressive activists who, in turn, become more paranoid that they are not heard by the mass. So the violence has to be made even more monstrous.'

Here in this regressed foetal position, with the womb-world collapsing in behind and the birth channel constricted in front, the being is reduced to traumatised passivity or frenzied irrational aggression. As pressures build up, the ambivalence intensifies up to and beyond the point of toleration and then there is Armageddon. Only if the work group can stay mobilised under that stress can the point of constriction become the birth matrix. Unable to face the heart of the split Lawrence oscillates from one side to the other, projecting onto the State the causal dynamics underlying social passivity, and here he is inconsistent even within his own framework. His argument moves from industrialisation, to man in the mass, to the overwhelming unknowable society, to the seduction of the State into handling that chaos. Then he reverses the process,

'Social passivity .... is engendered albeit unwittingly by the State and its agencies and is also engendered in industrial and other enterprises.'

The disturbance of logical process is evidence of Lawrence's nearness to the abyss. His eyes are averted from the horrors of the reality, and gazing in the other direction he projects onto government, the State, the industrial enterprise, the originating causality of the disturbance. This defensive displacement dominates the rest of his paper as he flies from the analysis and interpretation of the fundamental regression into an attempt to manage some of its more superficial effects. The source of engendering is projected as far as possible from the matrix, and the primitive paranoid-schizoid defence against anxiety once again shows its capacity to deflect the analyst, and to preserve itself from examination.

Immediately Lawrence oscillates back again to the intrapersonal, though with increasing bewilderment about how to make the link between the two sets of phenomena. He notes,

'The disconnection from the realities of life'.

He quotes Friedenberg who

'suggests that we are experiencing a psychic closing-off on the part of individuals, a psychological alienation which deprives people of the capacity to accept or even become aware of their own feelings.'

Lawrence comments,

'This is familiar enough terrain. What is much more difficult to get a purchase on are the large-scale, unconscious social processes present in society.'

So the fatal split in society is reflected into a fatal split within analysis, a fundamental discontinuity between the intrapersonal process and the social process for which the frame of reference has no answering construct.

This fatal split between man and the institutions of society is traced by Raymond Williams to what he calls

> 'the crisis of the knowable community', which he asserts, can be traced back to the 20 months between 1847 and 1848. During this period contemporary novelists 'experienced extraordinary changes in English society. Agreed social and moral codes began to disintegrate with the advent of industrialisation.'

Or again, quoting Williams himself,

> 'An increasing scepticism, disbelief, in the possibility of understanding society; a structurally similar certainty that relationships, knowable relationships, so far from comprising a community or society, are the positive experience that has to be contrasted with the ordinarily negative experience of the society as a whole .... An important split takes place between knowable relationships and an unknown, unknowable, overwhelming society.'

So the point of social regression is defined in the face of the overwhelming complexity of data contained in mass society, itself triggered off by the process of industrialisation and in no sense dependent upon the State, although its effects are projected onto the State apparatus and the industrial institutions, so shaping them into collusion with the fundamental regression.

Lawrence continues,

> 'So we are in a position where it is believed that society is unknowable, is a "thing", is a reification. This is one central myth of contemporary industrial cultures, and one which structures the perceived and felt relatedness of the individual to society. It is, then, understandable why the mass becomes socially passive and psychologically numb and amenable to the power of the State and, by extension, to the power of any institution and enterprise of society.'

In that paragraph lies the opening to the dead end into which Lawrence plunges blindly. Having named the myth he feels his task is done, but he fails to analyse the unconscious dynamic which generates the myth as a defence against anxiety, and which gives it power to create the social processes which he then describes. Rather than engage in analysis, Lawrence moves on to the process of control, so colluding with the defensive system.

Yet, at another level, he shows his awareness of this collusion and names it by displacement (page 239).

> 'In this dissociation of the knowable from the unknowable the social sciences have had their part to play. Indeed, the salient methodologies of the social sciences have legitimated the myth of the split between the individual and society. Practitioners of the social sciences, for the most part, have failed to use their imaginative capabilities.

Subjectivity has been pushed out of scientific discourse. It may well be that this is because practitioners have been concerned about their own purity and have avoided situations and methodologies which might endanger their "professionalism".'

The Tavistock Model and the institutions to which it has given rise are an epitome of that process. One gains the impression that, where Lawrence writes of others operating within the field of the social sciences, he is describing what he perceives in a mirror, yet subject to the fatal split in identification of the image observed. He argues that,

'The social sciences ought to be a skin trade exploring the boundaries that are problematic - psychic, social, and political skins - because disorder is not to be kept at bay but entertained, understood, and worked with as a route to new forms of being which would include the political relatedness of the individual to society. Some research methodologies, however, because they protect the scientist from uncertainty, proclude this kind of knowing.'

And yet here again we experience the Tavistock Model being used by responsible consultants, by the Institute itself, by its environment, precisely as a function to keep disorder at bay, blocking the route to new forms of being and protecting scientists involved from uncertainty. Unless the Tavistock Institute is able to apply to itself the insights which it has about others, its integrity as a research institute is called in question.

It is imperative to examine the control functions being exercised by the social sciences within the regressive defences against anxiety of industrial society. As the sense of overwhelming chaos increases within the global construct, so the defences against anxiety handled by the behavioural sciences on behalf of that society become more and more rigid, ritualistic, brittle, fixated and convoluted. Again, Lawrence appears to perceive this process and yet be unable to relate to it or apply his perceptions creatively, either within his own person, or in his base institute. It is possible to interpret the primary task of the Tavistock Institute as handling that boundary between the known and the unknown, managing the terrors of facing the fatal split in society, guarding the padlock on the lid to Pandora's box, to open which is to liberate social chaos. So the Institute is caught in the incarnation of antithesis. Its purpose is antithetical to its dynamic process. Its perceived task is the courageous exploration of the boundaries of tolerable stress, of the defences against anxiety experienced in interpersonal, group, inter-group, institutional and societal dynamics. Yet the task for which it is used by the environment is the obverse. The anxieties about the unexaminable are projected into the Institute, setting up enormous repressive, pressures, which in turn generate intra-institutional processes which collude with the societal agenda of suppressing examination of a primitive anxiety defence system in operation. Collusion with this process would appear to be in place at every level of the Institute from the intrapersonal to its environmental boundary.

How accurately Lawrence reflects the ambivalence as to whether

'the social sciences are to provide neatly ordered accounts of reality, or whether the accounts are to reflect the complexity and latent disorder,'

or quoting Schwartz,

'The thrust of the behavioural sciences is to stamp out disorder because the sciences can not deal with it; to create activities that are conducive to control and hence to prediction; to make the complex simple because otherwise it cannot be comprehended.'

Then, after a discussion of some of the difficulties which the social sciences encounter where they cease to take account of the unconscious processes in force, with the simplification of all political realities into some kind of field of basic interpersonal relations, Lawrence, I think accurately, comments that,

'This kind of impression is an inevitable outcome of the split between the knowable and the unknowable community; the dissociation of objectivity from subjectivity; the division between modes of knowing. The healing of these splits, it is commonly believed, can only be brought about through "solving" interpersonal relations; the mechanics of relating. The subjective society carried inside the individual is disregarded. But I am beginning to believe that it is the society "in the mind", the internalized experiences, the introjected and projected experiences of that object we call "society' that need to be identified. My hunch is that if the necessary language could be created to explore these experiences of the fatal split between what is perceived to be knowable and unknowable we would be some way towards making available for inspection the not so conscious social processes which I have been indicating.'

At no point does Gordon Lawrence face more clearly his work agenda. It is precisely to the matrix of the fatal split that attention must be directed. Tragically here again he immediately flies away from the work agenda, colluding once again with the defensive system he has named. Significantly at this point he turns to 'the lineaments of destruction' and their control.

'A major constraint on being able to identify and interpret this destructiveness rests in the very processes of an industrial society. Social passivity, psychological alienation, narcissism are all interrelated. This produces social impotence which produces passivity, etc., and a mindless destruction and violence. It would be too neat to see these in cause and effect terms. They happen; spasmodically erupting in confusing configurations.'

Once again Lawrence retreats from the analysis of the causal trauma underlying the fatal split, and projects it onto the process of industrial society, yet finds in that construct no conceptual framework which can hold it together. He is constricted by the experienced repression, naming his agenda in symbolic word forms. The description has to do with spasmodic convulsion, eruption, confusion, in a mindless, causeless, vortex of impotence, passivity and rage. The nexus is displayed but not named.

In the very next sentence Lawrence comes so tantalisingly close to interpretation.

'What we can hypothesize, however, is that just as there is a fatal split between the knowable and unknowable of society, and the hows of knowing, so there is a fatal split between life and death. The presence of death is made absent, wished away in contemporary societies.'

Here the fatal split is incorporated into his own thinking, leading to fundamental reversal of symbols, the myth still rules. The fatal split between life and death is accurately identified, death is perceived corporately as the end of life, destruction and the end of the world. As the environment becomes overwhelming, as the cosmic dependence base becomes inadequate, as the global construct is experienced as crushing, so the societal regression mirrors the multiple intrapersonal regressions, and the constriction is perceived as the end of life rather than the emergence into life. The fatal split is between womb-world and afterbirth. Death is the here and now, life is the other side of the tunnel To live in this world is to face the collapse of the womb, and the terror of the black hole of the abyss, projected into the mythology that through that vortex is only destruction. It is not death that is made absent and wished away in contemporary society, but birth, and so deprived of hope, the workgroup sees 'ichabod' written across its agenda, regresses into passivity and dies.

Following through the split, Lawrence can only look to the collective historical experience of people in the 20th century as the source of the dynamic, the arbitrariness of death, wars, political purges, exterminations, the concentration camp and the gas chamber. These are precisely the end products of the projection, the phenomena of the underlying dynamics. They are not the source of the split. Freud also missed this point, and Lawrence calls his misconception to his defence. Freud's identified the paradox that

> 'the more people become defended against death, and the inevitability of their own death, the more it becomes possible for death to be manufactured and split off from life. Destruction and violence are thus split off from the fact of death, and in such a non-emotional climate can be at times regnant.'

Now we know that the defences against death are precisely the defences against birth. The defence mechanisms brought into play as death approaches are the deeply primitive paranoid schizoid defences whose pattern is laid down in the matrix. Freud flies to the other end of life in his search for understanding, and in so doing, lays down a permissive highway of escape for the psychoanalyst.
In this tortuous process of oscillation, Lawrence immediately rebounds with a 'but', to comment,

> 'But there are people who are identifying, exploring and interpreting these frightening "public issues" ...... Almost predictably it is left to some poets, and not the majority of social scientists, to make some purchase on these near-intractable processes I have briefly indicated.'

Inevitably, it is the theme of suicide which emerges. If life is death and the future hell, if society is overwhelming and unknowable, if the cosmos is in pieces, then insanity is the rational response and self-destruction is the authentic act in the face of reality. The telos of the myth is clear. Alvarez comments on the artistic process within the individual exploring his own feelings, pressing through to that boundary between the tolerable and the intolerable, to explore which, within the constraints of the myth, is to face not birth but death. But to examine which, with accurate understanding and analysis of the dynamics which lead to the myth, is to engage in birth not death. If the frontiersmen of this exploration are crushed by society into the scapegoats, the victims, the mad and the suicide, in order to preserve the myth and sustain the regression, then social hope is dead. It is through this constricted point that the work leader must drive, but he can only walk here when the fear of death has no

more power over him. Perhaps we should see Pierre Turquet as a forerunner, charting the passage, pressing through the matrix, risking the tunnel effect, going in and out across the boundary and coming back to say: "There is a world beyond. Life after birth is reality'. Yet he dies in despair because his words fall on stopped ears. Terror constrains his companions to the point where they say: "We cannot come with you".

Lawrence continues his flight to the other end of life with a 'nevertheless',

> 'Nevertheless, my postulate is that the social sciences have much the same task as the Extremist poets which is, as Alvarez ends his book, to force "its audience to recognise and accept imaginatively in their nerve- ends, not the facts of life but the facts of death and violence: absurd, random, gratuitous, unjustified, and inescapably part of the society we have created. 'There is only one liberty', wrote Camus in his Notebooks, 'to come to terms with death. After which everything is possible.""

Lawrence continues,

> 'But I would want to turn around some of what Alvarez says. In particular, I want to suggest that the getting in touch with the nihilism of society is, in fact, possible through political management from within the individual. Social change, which implies an inspection of social realities, starts from the individual considering his or her authority for being in a role in institutions of a society.'

He offers then as a working agenda increasing skill in 'the management of oneself in role'.

Now I also would want to turn round some of what Alvarez says and would rewrite it thus,

> 'Our task is to face in ourselves, and to give others courage so to face imaginatively in their nerve-ends, not the facts of death but the facts of birth, crushing, violent, absurd, random, gratuitous, unjustified, inescapably part of the experience of everyman. There is only one road into freedom and that is through the constriction of birth. He who has come to terms with that can face all things, for to him even death is a little birth'.

THE MANAGEMENT OF ONESELF IN ROLE

The closing six pages of Lawrence's work bear all the marks of deflection from an unfaceable task. The split is fatal and inevitable. It has to do with death. There is no beyond. Avoidance of the terminus is all that can be expected. Our task is to manage the here and now of the prison and wait for the execution. The concluding construct accepts the myth of industrial society and acts as if it is true, since within the Tavistock Model (the Bion construct) there are no tools for its understanding. For Bion life begins at the breast on the far side of the fatal split.

However, even within this construct Lawrence indicates his intuitive awareness of ambiguity and contradiction. He writes,

'I have been trying to indicate that we are imprisoned in our institutions and in societies. W.R. Bion in a recent interview talked about institutional imprisonment but pointed to some basis for hope. "The trouble about all institutions - the Tavistock Institute and every one that we have - is that they are dead, but the people inside them aren't, and the people grow and something is going to happen. What usually happens is that the institutions (societies, nations, states and so forth) make laws. The original laws constitute a shell, and then new laws expand that shell. If it were a material prison, you could hope that the prison walls would be elastic in some sort of way. If organisations don't do that, they develop a hard shell, and then expansion can't occur because the organisation has locked itself in:"

Again so near, and yet so far. These words are about imprisonment, containment, of being inside something, the experience of being a growing person in an increasingly constricting environment, the sense that something has got to burst. But we don't name womb we name a shell, moving from mammalian to reptilian symbolism; the shell of laws, expanded by new laws; the longing for elastic walls for the prison; we cry 'make the womb bigger, more womb, more womb', but no birth. The experience of the hard shell refusing expansion, locking the organisation and its people within some institutional tomb. The tragedy of Lawrence's reaction is that he accepts this containment within the prison. The fatal split is in place. To examine the split would be fatal. In this position, his work agenda is inevitable, namely that of the management of role within the prison walls. He writes

'Institutions have locked themselves in both politically and psychically, and so have, perhaps, the majority of the people who serve them. Consequently, the realization of the promise of the value of management of oneself in role, or some variation on it, or a more radical alternative, while it remains always a possibility, always will be constrained… So the starting- point is the individual in his or her roles in relation to the systems in which he or she lives and works. This has always been a concern of the group relations training of this Tavistock Model.'

Precisely. We experience life within the hard old wineskins of our social institutions, fermentation evokes terror, the shell might crack and the contents spill. New wineskins are unheard of. Our task is to learn to behave well as old wine. The socialisation process rules.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

The self-destructive process of man in the mass, acting out the regressive myth of womb life as a defence against anxiety, in a world experienced as unknowable, is well described (page 247). Lawrence then asks,

'How can the cycle be converted into a virtuous one? An answer is beyond me at present. What I guess I know are some of the issues to be faced. The vicious cycle derives some of its energy from the basic assumption dependency around which organisations are mobilized. The dependency and social passivity present in the larger society are taken across the boundary of enterprises by individuals as role-holders and vice versa. Dependency of a basic assumption nature is pre-eminently available for study in enterprises.'

Again at this crucial point of confusion and uncertainty, the author has recourse to dependency upon Bion whose concept of dependency is limited to the world of afterbirth and is therefore inadequate as a construct within which to handle the regressive fundamental dependency of womb life. Here is the shell in action. The attempt to expand understanding is blocked by the legal framework of the Bion construct within which understanding is an impossibility. The answer to Lawrence's question lies beyond the Tavistock Model and while he lives within that model the answer will always be beyond him. He speaks of the consultant as

> 'available for projections. The experience of basic assumption dependency has its outcomes: "the insidious costs of excessive dependency are erosion of self-esteem, chronic feelings of helplessness and depression" (Menninger 1972). These are present very often in the consultant/client relationships and the consultant is available to receive these feeling from the client. These have to be contained and then made available through working hypotheses and interpretations, in order that the client has an opportunity to re-introject them on his or her authority. There is a sense in which this essay has some of these qualities and an element of this task.'

I would hypothesise that the Tavistock Institute itself, as a consultative unit within society, is subject to societal projection of the paranoid-schizoid defence with such power that the Institute has been unable to introspect its own primitive anxiety defence system, the compulsive clinging to the known Bion framework is but one facet of this phenomenon. The key interpretation is repressed within the Institute in order to preserve society from facing the unfaceable.

And so we move into those vitally revealing last three paragraphs of the book, where Lawrence faces the frontier and returns in dread to Egypt.

> 'To acknowledge the helplessness, the social impotence, the loss of self-esteem, the social paranoia, the individual and social depression, would be to enter the disarray, chaos, and uncertainty that the breaking of excessive individual dependency, or its collective counterpart, social passivity, would incur'.

He speaks of others intentionally, yet epitomises his own position. The 'would be' indicates perceptive intuition of the suffering and process involved, but in its conditional stance demonstrates the fundamental avoidance of that engagement. It is as if the Tavistock Institute is aware of the convulsions it would face if it were to wrestle with this material, and so avoids it at all costs.

Lawrence notes,

> 'Alvarez pointed to the psychic territory: "that exploration of the nexus of anger, guilt, rejection, love and destructiveness". To this can be added that other complex nexus, the bond, link, relatedness, relationship, or whatever "it" is that joins or dissociates individuals through their roles to or from their groupings.'

Alvarez offered suicide as authentic exploration of that nexus. I would point to birth.

Changes in the intensity of societal regression are beginning to be noted,

'One constraint is that it is increasingly difficult for the individual to experience, let alone to name these nexuses. Hypotheses to explain this difficulty have been offered. There is increasing narcissism; lack of questioning of taken for- granted assumptions about authority; myths of political relatedness. Primarily, however, the constraint is anxiety against experiencing disarray.'

The global construct knows that it is advancing into a period of increasing disarray. Mother Earth, pregnant with mankind, can no longer hold the growing race. Birth spasms are about to begin. The myth is that the end of the world is nigh. No wonder the regression pattern is perceived as intensifying.

To the end however, Lawrence pursues his intuitively perceived goal, albeit with inadequate tools.

'But anxiety, disarray, chaos, uncertainty are the seed-beds of creativity for renewed being. So I am postulating that we need to demystify assumptions about the social and political connectedness of individuals to society by putting them into doubt, making them uncertain; interpreting unconscious social processes; altering modes of knowing the social worlds of men and women:

The demythologising programme must have as its focus the fatal split between womb and afterbirth. The process of demythologising involves the work group in intense experiences of anxiety, disarray, chaos, and uncertainty, in the face of which deflection, regression and collusion are brought continually into play. As we try to pilot the canoe down the rapids of the White Nile the temptation is to curl up in a ball on the bottom of the boat, bury our head in our hands and close our eyes. The work group must stay in place, utterly alert, refusing to allow terror to dull reactions to environmental reality. Only so is there any real social hope of a way through the nexus of the end of the 20th century.

'Clearly', Lawrence concludes, 'I am searching for ways of making real social hope. Despite the constraints, I come back to the proposition that managing oneself in role is a realisable value.'

His goal is clear, his methodology tangential. The embraced means is an avoidance of the end.

So as he faces the future, Lawrence notes that,

'hope cannot be placed in large scale changes in society, in what passes for education in industrial societies in consumer education, or in messianic movements. Social hope begins with men and women questioning cultural assumptions and taking authority for interpreting them, no matter where that search for truth leads. But that implies that they have made themselves sufficiently aware of the fact and process of death to make life worth the questioning.'

In the Bion model hope is a characteristic of the pairing group. In the holistic model reality-oriented social hope is the concomitant of the work group. Within the Tavistock Model there

is no room for birth and hence no room for resurrection. Life after birth is an illusion and the work group dies in despair.