Editors' Introduction:
Values, and the Journal's Guiding Perspectives

Ever since the publication of Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921)* psychoanalysis has demonstrated a consistent interest in the human group. However it was not until the Second World War that a coherent body of work first emerged which was devoted to applying psychoanalytic insights to group, organisational and social phenomena. Indeed, as with Kurt Lewin's work on small groups in the USA, it was war which provided the catalyst. In the UK psychiatrists and others associated with the Tavistock Clinic made a series of innovative, and at times controversial contributions to the war effort in areas such as officer selection and the rehabilitation of soldiers traumatised by combat. In this enterprise, the work of Bion, Rickman, Foulkes, Main, Trist and others offered the first practical demonstration of the value of applying psychoanalytic insights beyond the consulting room. The creation of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in 1947 was a key moment in the development and institutionalization of this tradition. It provided the setting for a range of important research studies, often in close collaboration with members of the Tavistock Clinic, undertaken in the following decade. From these a discernible paradigm began to emerge, referred to by Barry Palmer in an essay in this volume as the 'Tavistock Tradition'.

It is worth reflecting upon some of the primary ingredients which contributed to this paradigm. Firstly, it was heavily influenced by Kleinian thought, perhaps not surprising given that it was in the period after the Second World War that the Kleinians, at first largely concentrated in London, launched themselves as a distinct group within the world psychoanalytic movement. Indeed, in 1945 Bion started analysis with Melanie Klein and resumed his training at the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. As a consequence a range of concepts such as splitting, projective identification, persecutory anxiety and, later, the container/contained have found their way into the heart of this tradition. One of the earliest and most powerful applications of Kleinian theory to organisational life was the concept of social systems as organised defences against anxiety, developed by Jaques (1951) and later by Menzies (1960). But it is worth noting, in passing, the selective drawing upon psychoanalytic ideas that occurred here – not much was

imported from classical Freudian theory, or Ego-Psychology nor, later, was that much brought in from Winnicottian Object-Relations or Lacanian currents. Secondly, it is useful to disentangle the contribution of the 'early Bion', the group-psychologist, from the 'later Bion' the leading Kleinian. Bion provided a specific set of tools for thinking about groups – group mentality, the basic assumptions, the work group, etc. – which have proven to be an enduring legacy. Thirdly, in making the step from the consulting room to the group, the organization and society, many of the early pioneers gathered around the Tavistock drew heavily upon systemic ways of thinking. Trist, in particular, was influential here, contributing the concept of socio-technical systems (Trist & Bamforth, 1951) and then Rice, and later Miller, drawing upon the concept of open systems (Miller & Rice, 1967).

Ken Rice, another member of the Institute from early on was a key figure in making another significant and enduring contribution. It was Rice (1965) , more than any other, who was responsible for designing an experiential learning event which provided the crucible in which many of the social phenomena first glimpsed by those within the Tavistock tradition could be revealed. The first event, held at Leicester University in 1957, was a pivotal moment both in the search for a way of educating individuals about the unconscious aspects of group and institutional life and in the training of staff interested in developing their capacity to consult to groups. Such 'Group Relations' events now occur throughout the world and provide the general conceptual and methodological framework around which many national and regional 'Group Relations' associations and networks have formed. But again, in passing, it is worth noticing something. Half a century after the birth of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations many researchers, consultants, managers and intellectuals, with a common interest in the application of psychoanalytic theory to group, organisational and social processes, still tend to refer to themselves by using the shorthand 'group relations'. It is doubtful whether the early pioneers would have imagined that the movement they help stimulate would have drawn its name not from the traditions of social research or organisational intervention they fostered but from a particular pedagogical practice developed by Rice in the late 1950's. But happily this situation is changing. Nowadays, the domain emerging from this tradition is often referred to as 'systems psychodynamics' or' socio-analysis.'

Ken Rice was also a key figure in the initial global dissemination of the Tavistock tradition. His leadership in this enterprise resulted, for example, in the formation of the A. K. Rice Institute in the U.S.A., the first of the major non-UK organisations devoted to group relations work. An essay by Larry Gould in this volume provides a vivid picture

of the impact of Rice on American colleagues in the 1960's. The later, gradual dissemination of this tradition, by a number of Rice's colleagues (notably, Alastair Bain, Shmuel Erlich and Eric Miller, to name a few), has led to many important new developments and applications, as it has been adapted to the particular cultural requirements of countries as diverse as Israel, France, Sweden & Australia. And in the process the hegemony of the Tavistock tradition has been challenged or modified as new discourses have emerged such as 'institutional transformation' (associated with the Institute for Social Innovation based in Paris) and 'socio-analysis' (linked to the Australian Institute for Socio-Analysis).

The preceding brief historical sketch is necessary to situate the overarching project and aim of this journal. One of the earliest initiatives undertaken by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations was to launch an international journal, *Human Relations*, in conjunction with Kurt Lewin's Research Center for Group Dynamics in the USA. Today *Human Relations* is over fifty years old and an internationally renowned journal which continues to focus upon social processes within organisational settings. But although it still takes contributions from writers drawing upon psychoanalytic perspectives this is no longer one of its primary foci, in that it has evolved into a more broad-based, academically oriented venue than it was originally. It seems appropriate therefore that *Organisational and Social Dynamics* should have arisen from an initiative undertaken by OPUS (an Organisation for the Promotion of Understanding of Society) which is firmly located within the original Tavistock tradition. Along with Eric Miller and Lionel Stapley, Barry Palmer was the key OPUS member in getting this initiative going. That Barry should die before this particular baby could be delivered is a great tragedy. We are proud to publish some of Barry's work in this inaugural issue of the journal and very grateful to Philip Boxer for preparing it for publication. We publish it deliberately more or less as it was written, as a set of working notes to a small group of colleagues, in the hope that it will convey something of the liveliness and vitality of Barry's mind at work. Moreover, by a delightful coincidence, his paper exemplifies one of the core values that will guide the development of this project – the capacity of authors to take a reflexive stance towards the values and assumptions of the traditions within which they have been socialised. All discourses, including that associated with the Tavistock tradition, cast a selective light upon human reality and to be aware of this is vital. It is in this spirit that *Organisational and Social Dynamics* seeks to take up the baton once held by *Human Relations*, that is, to provide a genuinely international forum for all those traditions and perspectives which, no matter what their

differences in emphasis, have a primary concern for the application of psychoanalytic and systemic ideas to our understanding of group, organisational and social processes.

We have mentioned the centrality of reflexivity to this journal project. It is worth mentioning some other values which will guide us. For example, continuing to promote the original intent of the founders and staff of the Tavistock Institute, namely, work at the interface between psychoanalysis and the social sciences. This means that we eschew forms of reductionism which, for example, apply psychoanalytic concepts wholesale to complex organisational processes. The domain of 'systems psychodynamics' is not simply applied psychoanalysis! Rather, we view organisational and social dynamics, while drawing on psychoanalysis, as well as other disciplines, as having its own distinct concepts and praxes. For example, we are as interested in how the social becomes part of the psychological, as we are with its opposite. Indeed the importance of the group comes precisely from the way in which it mediates between inner and outer – it occupies the transitional space between the sociological and political on the one hand and psyche and the soma on the other. As such, we view this Journal as making a significant contribution to what David Armstrong refers to as creating a 'third' vertex which contains, but is different from the diverse domains from which it draws. Gordon Lawrence's concept of Social Dreaming exemplifies precisely what we have in mind. This has been both an innovation in practice, a new method through which a group can enter a common dream space, and an innovation in theory and in his essay in this volume Lawrence reflects upon some of the social implications of this praxis. This essay also demonstrates the permeability of a mind to other ways of thinking, another value which is central to this journal's project. Freud once spoke of the 'narcissism of minor differences', how the ways of our closest neighbours can often seem the most foreign to us. With this in mind we specifically hope that the journal will be receptive to new developments in neighbouring communities such as Group Analysis, the rapidly expanding field of the sociology of the emotions, the organisational learning milieux, conflict management, and others.

Bion was acutely aware of the way in which the early innovators, the mystics and prophets quickly become the new establishment. The Tavistock tradition and the broader group relations movement that it gave rise to have not been without their own inertial dimensions. Beyond this mileux, in the fifty years since its foundations were established, many new developments in theory and practice have occurred. *Organisational and Social Dynamics* will provide a forum where the impact of such developments can be debated. There are many that

could be mentioned but among the most important are the following.

Group relations was strongly influenced by Kleinian psychoanalysis but it has not always been alert to changes within the psychoanalytic movement itself. Bion, for example, was one of the key figures to inspire the development of what is now referred to as the post-Kleinian current out of which a range of new concepts such as 'negative capability' and 'the pathological organisation' have emerged, concepts which may prove particularly useful for the study of group and organisational processes. The contribution by Robert French and Peter Simpson to this volume examines the relevance of the notion of negative capability to the consultant's constructive use of 'not knowing'. Concepts of projective identification have been further developed and refined and this has impacted considerably upon psychoanalytic technique. The increasing importance of the counter-transference and a growing awareness of the analyst's active contribution to the analytic encounter have resonated with the development of self psychology, intersubjectivist and relational currents, particularly within the psychoanalytic community in the U.S.A. Such developments will surely have implications for the way in which those applying psychoanalytic perspectives to group and organisational interventions conceive of their role. Rina Bar-Lev Elieli's essay in this volume draws upon Winnicott's work, particularly his notion of 'holding', to offer precisely such reflections.

There have also been major conceptual advances in human systems thinking. Whilst the use of 'open systems' theory enabled giant strides to be made in the early years of group relations there may be a sense in which this theory was a creature of its times, appropriate to a particular form of organisation – stable, bounded and internally homogenous. For many contemporary organisations it is no longer at all clear where or how to locate the boundaries of the organisation . Arguably many no longer have identifiable 'insides' and 'outsides', nor stable objectives. Moreover, strategies are emergent rather than planned, and executive authority is contested and negotiated between multiple stakeholders. Complexity theory, with its emphasis on the self-organising properties of complex systems, introduces a whole new way of thinking systemically and, with concepts such as strange attractors, coupling, bifurcation, and so on, a whole new vocabulary for seeing in a different way. Nigel Williams' review in this volume of Mark Buchanan's book, *Ubiquity*, describes some of the new landscapes revealed by this way of thinking.

Changing organisational forms pose a challenge to other established ways of thinking psychoanalytically about organisations. For example, if organisations are no longer clearly bounded entities and if their

bodies have become more fluid and gelatinous rather than skeletal, then they can no longer function as containers of meaning and affect in the way in which they did in the past. It is possible that organisations have become increasingly emptied of affective meaning for employees whose primary identification has shifted to the work itself and/or to like-minded colleagues whose networks ignore organisational boundaries. Or, as is suggested by Ed Shapiro in his contribution to this volume, changing organisational forms imply that meaning now has to be built into the organisation by a painstaking dialogue around questions of its values, mission and social responsibilities. Whatever the case, post-modern organisational forms provide a new terrain for action-research and consultancy interventions – a terrain where influence is often more critical than formal authority, and where power moves in ever more mysterious ways.

Group relations has always preached the value of open dialogue in groups and organisations and has tended to believe that, so long as anxiety is taken care of, individuals will naturally overcome their resistance to learning from new experience, particularly from the experience of others. That organisation members might oppose dialogue, not out of anxiety or internal defensiveness, but because of their attachment to the virtues of concealment and manouvre has often come as a bit of a surprise. Psychoanalytically informed consultants have often not been very strong on organisational politics and as a result they have sometimes been naive about critical aspects of organisational functioning. Knowing how power operates, seeing how it makes use of human desires, especially unconscious ones, for its own ends, understanding its pervasiveness in corrupting and perverting positive emotions and attachments have, with few exceptions been a lacunae in group relations thinking. We hope, therefore, that the pages of this journal will provide a space for enlarging an understanding of the political dimensions of group and organizational life, both with a large and small 'p'. Indeed we are not only concerned to understand the penetration of politics into the emotional life of groups we are equally concerned with the penetration of collective emotions and phantasies in the life of society and its citizens. Tim Dartington's essay in this volume reflects on the unconscious and affective dimensions of the experience of citizenship in the UK during the 1990's by drawing on data generated by 'Listening Posts' – an innovative method which enables groups to share those aspects of their experience of citizenship which are normally less available for thought.

In addition, the powerful role of collective sentiments and projective processes in situations of social conflict has long been known but seldom made the focus of research or intervention. In a period when

many conflicts seem entrenched and enduring, intervention work has shifted from the optimistic ground of 'conflict resolution' to the more sanguine philosophy of 'conflict management'. Psychoanalytic and systemic ways of thinking applied to situations where there simply may be no immediate solution have proved very fruitful. Vamik Volkan's (Volkan & Harris, 1992) work is probably most well known in this area but others working from this perspective have been active over a long period in countries like Northern Ireland and Israel. We are pleased to publish both the article by Paul Haupt and Charles Malcolm in this issue on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and Mannie Sher's review of Desmond Tutu's reflections on the complex nature of reparation in post-apartheid South Africa.

It is hoped that this outline of the guiding values, issues, and perspectives, while by no means exhaustive, provide a clear enough sense of the Journal's intent. It is in this spirit, therefore, that we welcome contributions that transform these ideals into realities that continue to enlarge, deepen and expand this domain as a distinct field of inquiry in its own right.

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